4-28

MEMOIRS

OF THE

LIFE AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

OF

RAY POTTER,

Minister of the Gospel, Pawtucket.

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PUBLISHED WITH A DESIGN TO MAGNIFY THE GRACE OF GOD IN SHEWING MERCY TO THE CHIEF OF SINNERS, AND TO ILLUSTRATE THE GLORIOUS DOCTRINES OF THE GOSPEL, BY GIVING A CIRCUMSTANTIAL ACCOUNT OF THE TRAVEL OF THE AUTHOR'S MIND, INTO THAT VIEW OF THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST, WHICH HE CONSIDERS TO BE THE TRUTH.

The subject being generally treated argumentatively, with frequent doctrinal inferences drawn from experience.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

"He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye."—Deut. xxxii. 10.

Providence:

H. H. BROWN.....PRINTER.

1829.

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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RHODE-ISLAND DISTRICT, *sc.*

[L. S.] *Be it remembered,* That on the 13th day of June, 1829, and in the fifty-third year of the Independence of the United States of America, RAY POTTER, of said District, deposited in this Office the title of a book the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the following words, viz.

" Memoirs of the life and religious experience of Ray Potter, Minister of the Gospel, Pawtucket. Published with a design to magnify the grace of God in shewing mercy to the chief of sinners, and to illustrate the glorious doctrines of the gospel, by giving a circumstantial account of the travel of the author's mind, into that view of the doctrine of Christ, which he considers to be the truth. The subject being generally treated argumentatively, with frequent doctrinal inferences drawn from experience. Written by himself.

" He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye."—Deut. xxxii, 10.

In conformity to an act of Congress of the United States, entitled " An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the time therein mentioned, and also to an Act entitled " An Act supplementary to an An Act entiled " An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the time therein mentioned, and extending the benefit thereof to the arts of designing, engraving and etching historical or other prints."

WITNESS,
BENJAMIN, COWELL,
Clerk of the Rhode-Island District.

C. B. Farnsworth Esq
Secretary &c

ADVERTISEMENT.

It occurred to me a few days before my book was out of press, that it would be proper enough for me to obtain testimonials from a few of my neighbours, in respect to my moral and religious character, and prefix it to the work. I *first* thought that I would obtain a certificate from the church under my care; but on reflection, concluded that it might be inferred that they were interested to blindness in my favour; and that it would be more proper to obtain something from those with whom I was not particularly connected in church capacity. I accordingly mentioned the subject to Mr. Bosworth Walker and Mr. Wm. Allen, members of the Association Baptist Church in this village; and they readily handed the following, with the remark, that many more signatures might be obtained if necessary. It is my duty, however, here to remark, that some of these gentlemen do not agree with me, in my theological sentiments.

Their signatures are very gratefully received, and I trust, with those who know them, will be considered worthy of attention.

"The undersigned having been acquainted with the Rev. Ray Potter for several years, some of us intimately, take pleasure in bearing testimony to the excellence of his character. We say without hesitation, or fear of contradiction, that during his residence in this place, his moral and his Christian character have been in all respects, as far as human observation can extend, unimpeachable. He has uniformly sustained the character of an honest, conscientious, zealous, and faithful religious teacher; and he appears to have the good will and respect of all denominations among us.

O. STARKWEATHER,
BENJ. FESSENDEN,
WILLIAM ALLEN,
ISAAC WILKINSON,
DANIEL SABIN,
ARCHIBALD KENNEDY,
JOSEPH HOOD,
OTIS TIFFANY,
C. DARLING,
BOSWORTH WALKER,
WILLIAM CHAFFEE,
DAVID BUCKLIN.

Pawtucket, June 4, 1829."

In respect to the characters and standing in society of these gentlemen, it might not be improper to mention—that Oliver Stark-

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Library Association.

weather, Esq. is a member of the Aassociation Baptist Church in this Village, has been for many years in the Senate of Mass. and was also one of the late electors of President of the United States.

Benjamin Fessenden—a Unitarian Clergyman. William Allen, Isaac Wilkinson, Archibald Kennedy, Joseph Hood, Bosworth Walker, and Willian Chaffee, members of the Association Baptist Church in this Village, and may be ranked with the most influential and leading members.

Otis Tiffany—Post Master.

C. Darling—Attorney at Law,

David Bucklin—one of the Selectmen of the Town.

All of the above, excepting Mr. Fessenden, have been my neighbours for about eight years—Mr. Fessenden some three or four years.

☞ PLEASE TO READ THE PREFACE.

Many consider it impracticable and beneath their dignity to publish the memoirs of their life themselves, while living. But why so? I think it *sometimes* expedient, and a duty. Great and good men have frequently done it. It may be answered that though *great* men have seen fit to do it, and in so doing they have benefitted mankind, yet that is no reason that an obscure individual, like myself, should undertake it. To which I answer; that although I may not be a great man, yet I am very sure that God has done *great things* for me; and most certainly it should be the design of all Christians, not to endeavour to shew *themselves* great, but to magnify the name of the Lord God; and never perhaps did grace have more to do than in bringing me to submit to the reign and government of Christ. But there is something in my life, which more than any other one thing urged me to the following publication: And that is, after my conversion, I was taught and received the Arminian system of doctrines; became a very strong one, (or perhaps to speak more consistently a very weak one) and preached it some time; when a gracious God took me in hand and drove me out of it, brought me to see its errors and to give it up. Since which I feel an inexpressible desire that *others*, who are now in the same situation, may see their mistake, renounce their errors, and embrace the whole truth. Feeling this anxiety, it seemed to me probable if I were to write my experience and exercises, and state how I had been led step by step, and draw argumentative inferences from my experience, it might be the means of doing good, especially with my old acquaintances and Arminian brethren, and that this plan would be more *likely* to do good than any other—for it is difficult to get the attention of many people to doctrinal subjects, where the treatise is exclusively so. My prayer to God is, that in pursuing the course which I have, I may be the means of doing *some* good.

To the learned, if any should ever chance to cast their eyes on the following pages, I would just remark that the author makes no pretensions to refined literature, or profound erudition. By perusing the following pages it will be seen that his privileges to *obtain* it (however desirable)

have been so circumscribed, as to render it *naturally* impossible. It is required of a man in *this respect* according to that which he hath: not according to that which he hath not; if therefore I write in the best style of which I am capable, he that despiseth on this account, has yet with all his knowledge "*one thing*" to learn before he is fit for heaven: And that is humility. It may be immediately answered that if I cannot write elegantly and in lofty style, I have no right to address the public from the press. I take the liberty to dissent from this opinion; I write sufficiently elegant to make *common people* understand what I mean, and if the learned cannot understand me, they may ask the illiterate to teach them; besides I have one powerful objection to much of the preaching and writing, on the great and glorious subject of religion, in these days; if I may so speak, it flies so high that it passes *over the heads* of the great majority, who ought to be instructed. Some, indeed, of erudition, make good use of their learning, in making the truths of the gospel appear plain to hearers and readers, of ordinary attainments; but many appear to gratify their own vanity and ambition of being considered great in the use of language, and a style that nothing short of a collegiate education would prepare a hearer to comprehend. And thus we see the wisdom and goodness of God, in committing the invaluable treasure of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, frequently to those, who, in expressing themselves, *must do it* in ordinary language, and in a plain, unvarnished style. Of this fact I think we have had ample demonstration in the preaching and writings of John Bunyan, and others of a similar character, whose works have flown down to succeeding generations—warning, instructing, and cheering multitudes on their way; while the laboured productions of thousands, who have, in their writings, principally sought for literary fame, have either been buried in oblivion, or read with satisfaction but by a few solitary individuals; and by those rather for amusement than for profit.

I would by no means be understood as declaiming against human learning, but rather the *bad use* which is frequently made of it. Be the reader ever so learned, yet if he love the truth, I am well assured that he will greatly rejoice that the grace of God has reigned victorious over *me*, one of the most stubborn and obstinate sinners that perhaps ever raised an arm against its progress, and will admire the wisdom, power, goodness and mercy

of God, in thus leading a blind sinner by a way which he knew not. If he love not the truth and professes not to believe the system of divinity which I advocate in the following pages, let him not condemn it as unworthy his notice on account of the style in which it is written, without proving it to be false, lest he be brought to the disagreable necessity of acknowledging that he cannot confute what he affects to dispise. My design is to promulgate truth.—It is dear to me, I trust ; and I also think that I feel willing to make personal sacrifices to spread it in the earth. I have not the vanity to suppose that there is any thing in the progress of my life extraordinary, or claiming public attention, if I except the wonderful display of God's grace in the forgiveness of my sins, and subsequently "*leading me about and instructing me.*" In this respect *I do* consider my life, or rather the dealings *of God with me*," worthy the notice of all ; as I believe it has been a subject of interest and attention with a higher order of beings than mortal men. I have these reasons, therefore, inducing me to lay the following before the Christian public, viz.

1st. An illustration of the goodness and grace of God, and the doctrines of the gospel, by exhibiting and drawing inferences from my own experience.

2d. A true account of the progress of my mind, step by step, in giving up the Arminian system, which I was taught in my youth, and embracing my present views.

3d. A full, clear, and explicit statement of what I do believe to be truth, which I have reason to believe has been often misrepresented, or at least misunderstood.

4th. A hope of doing good by softening the prejudices of my Arminian brethren, against the system of religion which I believe to be the everlasting truth of God.

5th. A fond hope of being a means, in the hands of God, of leading some who are now perplexed in the same way that I have been myself, into the gospel liberty.

6th. An earnest desire to comfort the people of God, and to be instrumental in building them up in the faith of the gospel.

7th. A hope of leading sinners to repentance.

In the course of what I have written I have endeavoured to have God's glory and the welfare of souls supremely in view. I have, indeed, studied to overthrow that which I believe to be false ; but in order to effect this, I have endeavoured to avoid all unfairness in argument, and

consider that what I have advanced is supported by plain, conclusive reasoning, and the word of God. I solemnly declare that I have a most tender regard for many who differ from me on points of doctrine discussed on the subsequent pages. I would not, for the world, unnecessarily hurt their feelings. I write for their good, sincerely wishing them well.

When I use the words Arminian or Arminianism, I use them to avoid circumlocution, and to express, in short, the system of religion which those who are called by this name believe to be true. And I would furthermore state that I do not mean to impeach those whom I allude to, as being Arminians with holding *to all* which has ever been ranked under that head—but consider them as agreeing, generally, with Wesley, Fletcher, and that class of writers. I ask not the reader to give place to error, if I advance it, but I *do* ask him to freely admit truth, whatever may have been his former prepossessions, and prejudices against it. I also bespeak his candour in weighing my arguments and forming his conclusions. It is a most desirable event that the people of God should see eye to eye. Let us therefore hear and endeavour to *understand* each other. I have many brethren in my native state, with whom I have taken sweet counsel, when I was an Arminian, who now appear to look on me as a hydra-headed monster, because they say I have turned "Calvinist." Now I beg the attention of these brethren to the following pages, and acknowledge that their *special benefit* was a subject of no small consideration in bringing me to the conclusion to publish this work,

I acknowledge that I have *changed my sentiments once*, but not but once. This change was completed some four or five years since, and the *reason* why I changed I am about to shew. I have given a short sketch of my childhood, &c. thinking that it might be interesting to some. I have endeavoured to avoid all personalities, and would not have alluded to any individual by way of censure, if it had been possible to have consistently avoided it. In the account which I have given of my separation from the Free Will Baptists, I have been obliged to do it, or not make the circumstances intelligible. I have nevertheless generally left a blank, instead of inserting the individuals' names. My object, if I know my own heart, is not to gratify personal revenge on individuals who may have injured me—I leave them to their God and their own consciences.

I can truly say, that to touch on the subject of the difficulty which has taken place years ago between myself and the Free Will Baptists, is disagreeable; nevertheless I knew not how consistently to avoid it. It is so; remains so; and they themselves lost no time in publishing it to the world: and as I undertook to write the memoirs of my life, if I were to have entirely passed over *that*, it would undoubtedly have been concluded by some, that I considered ed myself altogether in the fault, and was unwilling to let the case and circumstances be known. Let it be remembered, that my writings, in reference to this subject, are on the *defensive;* and not altogether on my *own account* neither. I shall undoubtedly be considered by them, harsh, censorious, and revengeful, as heretofore ; but I hope, nevertheless, that I have not indulged in a malignant spirit in writing, nor untrue or unjust expressions in reference to the subject. And I am very confident that nothing in all which I have said can be found equally censorious with some of their expressions in relation to myself, particularly some remarks made by one of their preachers in Quarterly Meeting, and afterwards published in the Magazine, not long since, which evidently were made in allusion to me, as I think the author will not deny. To be sure, I have borne testimony against their proceedings, and that for a good reason ; because I considered them wrong. If this be considered uncharitable and revengeful, then so be it ; I must bear the mark forever!

I would remark that in the following work I have not entered into a discussion of the subject of the communion, considering that it might not be profitable. I am, however, on the open communion plan, and the church under my care—and of course are not members of the Association. I am, however, as an individual, a life member of the Baptist State Convention, and for two years past have been appointed one of the board of managers, and take pleasure in lending my feeble aid in their Missionary operations, and all laudable undertakings.

Pawtucket, June 4, 1829.*

*If I live until the 22d of this month I shall be thirty-four years old.

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CHAPTER I.

Parentage—Birth—Childhood—Youth, &c.

I was born in Cranston, R. I. about five miles west of Providence, June 22, 1795, where I resided until I was about twenty-five years of age. My father's name was Andrew, and my mother's maiden name was Nancy Remington, born in the town of East-Greenwich, R. I. My father is yet alive,* but my mother is no more; she died in hope of a blessed immortality, almost two years since, having numbered about sixty-five years on earth. My parents were poor, but according to the general acceptation of the term, I believe they always maintained an irreproachable moral character. They however lived, according to their own testimony, by far the greater portion of their days, without God and religion in the world. My mother, I believe, was brought to the knowledge of the truth about sixteen years since, near the time that God called me by his grace, and ever after was a burning and shining light in the church, a mother in Israel, and finished her course with joy. My father lived still longer in a state of alienation from God, it being but about eight years since the Holy Spirit convinced him that he was a lost and undone sinner, notwithstanding all his claims to what the world are pleased to term a moral life. He is now, I hope, at rest in a

* Since the above was written, my father has deceased. His last end was peace.

better world. My parents being destitute of religion themselves, were incapacitated to give their children religious instruction, consequently I never received any from them in the days of my childhood or youth, nor do I recollect that ever any person on earth conversed with me personally, in order to call my attention to the great concerns of eternity, and the salvation of my soul, until God arrested me by his powerful Spirit, and translated me, as I hope, into the kingdom of his Son. But my parents gave good instruction so far as they had travelled themselves, and also enforced precept by their own example, for which I have reason to bless God; for I believe it was in consequence of their labours to hold up to my view in the days of my childhood what the world term dishonesty, together with all external wickedness and immorality in such disgusting colours; that the loathing it seemed to be coeval with my existence. For notwithstanding I have found myself to be one of the greatest sinners that ever the world bore up, yet I cannot recollect the time when I did not look on what is generally termed dishonesty with the utmost abhorrence. I remember when but a child, of being greatly distressed while with my mother, as she was gathering some very small brush, about as large as my little fingers, for fear it was stealing. One day, when about seven years old, as it was a fashionable thing with my play-mates, I thought I would use profane language, and not be so singular. But it seemed impossible. I uttered one or two oaths, when I became so panic-struck with the thought of taking the name of God in vain, that I abandoned it forever. Indeed I was preserved generally speaking from outbreaking sins and open wickedness in the days of my childhood and youth, which in itself was a mercy of God, and a blessing for which I ever should be thankful; yet nevertheless I turned this mercy, (as I am sure to do all others, unless prevented by divine grace) into a curse, which would certainly have ruined my soul forever, if God had not interposed with the arm

of his power and all conquering grace, and rescued me from impending ruin. I say I turned it into a curse. I mean I was one of the proudest Pharisees that ever lived, admiring and trusting in myself, while I condemned without mercy every deviation in others from my rules of self-righteousness. O how little did I then think that my heart was as a cage of unclean birds—deceitful above all things and desperately wicked—that I was *entirely destitute* of holiness, or that love to God and man, which the law requires; and that it was altogether owing to the restraining grace of God, that I differed from the vilest out-breaking sinner on earth. I now see plainly, that nothing short of an omnipotent, all-wise God, could ever have convinced me of these things, and all the talk about mere *moral suasion* being sufficient to bring such proud, obstinate, self-righteous, and self-conceited wretches as I was, to the knowledge of the truth, now sounds to me like idle tales. As it respects my natural feelings, they were easily moved. I was easily irritated, and on the other hand, I was too easily persuaded. Good nature, moving address, and pleasant words, were to me almost irresistible, and I know not into which of these weaknesses and foolish extremes I was most frequently thrown. The power of sympathy with me was always strong. I was easily moved with the sufferings of my fellow beings, and although extremely irritable, and easily excited, yet I never to my recollection inflicted a blow on one of my playmates or companions in youth. And this not because I feared being vanquished, (for I reigned king among them in wrestling, on which I valued myself) but because my natural feelings revolted at the sight of suffering and distress; and it is impossible for me to describe my sensations and pain, whenever I witnessed any two engaged in *bruising* each other.

I was naturally of a lively turn of mind, and *excessively* so, except at times or intervals, when I was almost overwhelmed in melancholy and dejection. I always had a thirst after reading. At a very tender

age my parents were frequently under the necessity of using their authority in compelling me to leave my books at a late hour, and retire to my bed. History was my delight. It was a great mercy that I possessed this taste for books, for without it, I should not have attained a common school education, as my privileges for obtaining it were quite limited. My parents being poor, and having a large family, it became indispensibly necessary that I should be put to labour as soon as my age would possibly permit. I however generally made a shift, after having worked through the summer for wages, to obtain a place in the winter where I could be allowed my board and the privilege of going to school for what I could do independently of my school hours. I pursued my studies closely when I had opportunity, rising at 4 o'clock in the winter season, and devoting the hours between this and sunrise, to English grammar, so that I might attend to other branches in school. In this way I acquired a tolerable English education, was considered qualified to teach a school myself, which I engaged in at different times, with general satisfaction, and was also employed for about three years as clerk of a manufacturing establishment in my native town. My father however being a mechanic himself, and considering it an indispensible duty binding on himself to give all his sons a trade, I accordingly commenced working with him at the carpentering business, and acquired a knowledge of that art. I was therefore a carpenter and the son of a carpenter—but how unlike Him, who was the reputed son of Joseph, and who undoubtedly worked at the humble occupation himself!

I was much taken up with politics at a very early age, was extremely tenacious of my principles, and vehement in declaiming, when quite a boy, against those political men and measures which were averse to the predilections of my childhood, and against which my earliest prejudices had been excited, from hearing the conversation of my relatives and friends.

My father was a soldier in the revolutionary conflict, and I used to listen to the recital which he often gave of the scenes which he passed through, and which came under his observation while in the army, contending for the independence of his country. I read much of the rise and fall of empires, of the wars of the ancient Greeks and Romans, and was frequently carried away with a kind of political enthusiasm, and filled with admiration and delight in reading and hearing of the patriotic and chivalrous exploits of great generals, valiant conquerors, and invincible armies. I had a great thirst for military glory, and entered voluntarily a member of a chartered military company, some time before the law required me to bear arms, and had my vanity gratified in being chosen clerk of the company immediately, and stood fair in the usual course of gradation for a commission, when my mind took a turn another way, and I renounced it altogether. In short, I had glory in view, (I mean my own glory) in my youthful days, and felt determined to wade through difficulties and obstacles to attain it, which was one great reason why I did not spend much of my time as many of my playmates did, who were not so moved on by the pride of their hearts, to seek for something great to attract the notice and draw forth the praise of mortals, but whose depravity induced them to pursue a different course of *present sensual gratification.* Thanks be to him who eventually taught me that I was following after a shadow, an imaginary enjoyment, which never could be realized in the way which I was running, but that my then present course would lead me on to disgrace, instead of honour, and if I did not stop and turn from the error of my ways, I should soon find myself clothed with shame and everlasting contempt.

CHAPTER II.

Early Religious Impressions—Conversion, &c.

I was always in bondage through fear of death, until the grace of God delivered me from it, by the forgiveness of my sins. I was, perhaps, uncommonly exercised with gloomy thoughts on this subject, in the very early part of my life. I used to lament bitterly, that I must die, when but a small child. I used to meditate upon the subject and thought if I must die, I would beg to be buried near by the house of my parents, for I could not bear the thoughts of being deposited in the lonesome grave-yard. I remember entering into conversation upon this subject, when six or seven years old, with my brother N. which was really affecting to me. He told me the reason why we must all die—because Adam eat the forbidden fruit. I lamented bitterly that Adam had brought this ruin upon his posterity. It was a dreadful thought to me that my body must see corruption, and be devoured by worms. Thoughts like these would frequently break in upon my mind, and mar my enjoyment in the pleasures of sin.

When about ten years old, I was put by my father to work for a farmer, about three miles from home, through the season. During the time I staid here, I was inexpressibly unhappy Removed from the company of my parents, and among strangers, I was in a situation to have my mind overwhelmed with foreboding thoughts of death and eternity; and added to those reflections on these subjects which were *ordinary*, was the idea that the world would be destroyed that season. There was to be an extraordinary conjunction of the planets that season, and some one had declared that a conflagration of our earth would certainly take place at the same time. This filled my mind with horror—I used scripture to calm my fears, but still being an unbeliever, it would not support me.

How different is that trust which a person reposes in the word of God, who never has had a *Divine assurance* impressed on his mind of the truth of the scriptures, from that of him who has *seen* the kingdom of God—into whose *heart* God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, has shined, to give him the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. I was almost every day in great consternation. I frequently imagined that I saw a great difference in the appearance of the sun from its usual aspect, and expected every moment it would begin to scorch the earth, and that the elements would melt with fervent heat. I sometimes fell on my knees and prayed to God. I was filled with apprehension when I retired to rest at night, that the dreadful catastrophe would transpire before morning. I scarcely dared to close my eyes in sleep, and felt disconsolate and unhappy beyond description.

But the summer passed away—the world stood unshaken, and I returned in autumn to my father's house. But I forgot God and all his benefits. I grew harder in sin, and more lively and vain than ever. I spent the winter at school. The ensuing spring I was engaged to Mr. K. of Cranston, a kinsman of my father. He filled a number of important offices in the State and town. He kept a grocery store in which I attended; worked in the garden, &c. in the summer, and attended school in the winter. He was remarkably kind and indulgent, and never gave me an angry word that I recollect, during the two years which I lived with him.

I do not recollect many serious thoughts in the course of these two years. The Sabbath in the neighbourhood was almost wholly disregarded—grocery stores being generally opened for the sale of spirituous liquors; and it was made a place of rendezvous by persons from different parts of the town, to assemble for recreation, such as ball-playing, and the like. O how much like a heathen I passed my precious time on the Sabbath, and other time which should have

been devoted to the service of God. I remember one circumstance which I have often thought of with some degree of astonishment, which I will here mention.—I had been engaged one day (if my memory serves me it was on the Sabbath) in ungodly recreation with one of my young companions, and after having grown weary with our exercise, we sat down in a grove to rest, and began to converse; when he assumed an air of positiveness, and told me that, notwithstanding I was then so vain and wild, I should yet be a preacher of the gospel. Although, perhaps, I could not long after recollect a single item of the conversation which passed between myself and my young mates at this season of my life, but *this*, yet THIS was always retained in my mind.

At the expiration of about two years, I left Mr. K's and went to live with his father, the Hon. Mr. K. of Cranston, who was uncle to my father, and a very particular friend of our family. He was then a representative from Rhode-Island, in the Congress of the United States, and had just returned home, when I commenced my residence with him. I loved him affectionately, and anticipated much comfort in company with him and his family. But my expectations were blasted. When he returned from the South, he was out of health, and although it was hoped that a relief from the cares with which he had been loaded, would be the means of his restoration, yet his friends were disappointed in their anticipations, by seeing him daily failing, and apparently, rapidly approaching eternity. At length the fatal hour came—the family, and I among the rest, were called in the watches of the night, to witness the last conflict between life and death—the reigning king conquered. It made an impression on my mind not easily to be described. I made promises to God to live a better life. I felt dejected and melancholy for a season, but soon relapsed into my old course of sin and folly. I was, however, frequently disturbed in my mind, and sometimes death and judgment were so presented to my view, as almost to

drive me to distraction, for a few moments, until I could obtain respite by turning away my attention.

In consequence of the death of Mr. K. it was necessary for me to seek employment somewhere else.—I accordingly accepted an offer from Mr. B. of Providence, with whom I continued until the ensuing spring, attending in his grocery store. This, however, was not a situation much calculated to effect a reformation in me, even if such a work had depended on *human means*. I grew nothing better, but rather worse. In the spring (being fourteen years old the June following) I bargained with Mr. F. of Cranston, to work on his farm through the summer. Here I found a situation in many respects calculated to foster serious reflections, if I had been disposed to improve it. I was remote from my young and merry companions in sin —the situation was retired, it being a very large farm, and the house about in the centre, and but a few houses within a considerable distance. There were, however, disadvantages. Some of the family were deistical. Miss E. F. a single lady, who had attained to about the age of forty, having natural abilities of a superiour order, used to entertain me with her philosophical lectures. She was peculiarly gifted in communicating her ideas. She used to expatiate on the character of God from his works of creation and providence, and considered the doctrines of the gospel entirely inconsistent with his moral perfections. What a pity that such rare abilities should be so perverted, and made subservient to the propagation of the principles of infidelity, and infusing them into the minds of the youth! I think it was about this time that I sometimes spoke against the bible! I remember of harangueing my young companions on the subject, and declaring to them the bible could not be true, for it was self-contradictory. This I wickedly said, when at the same time, I had not read, perhaps, twenty chapters in it, during my life. I was egregiously ignorant of even the theory of the Christian religion.—What an opposition reigns in the heart of man to God

and his truth! How many in the world do as I did, condemn the bible and the Christian religion as a fable, who have never given the subject an hour's candid attention in their lives. All which they know of it, is, that it condemns them in their rebellion against God, and in order to rid themselves of *this*, they condemn *that*, without ceremony, not taking the trouble to examine the evidences (which are irresistible) of its authenticity. But I did not often do this. There was with me, almost constantly, a kind of foreboding that the bible was true, notwithstanding all the deistical arguments which I heard to the contrary, and the willingness of my own *heart* to fall in with error. I was like the troubled sea, whose waters cannot rest. The thoughts of death and eternity were much on my mind. The farm lay contiguous with the bay, and I made a practice of walking to the shore in the evening, and seating myself on the banks, and there give way to reflection. Vessels were almost continually passing and repassing, and my mind would often be much attracted to try the sea, and visit distant climes in quest of happiness and wealth. I found an aching void in my mind, which nothing would seem to fill. I was often dejected and melancholy to such a degree, that I knew not what to do with myself.

The summer, however, passed away, and I returned to my father's neighbourhood, and resided with Mr. K. again through the winter, and attended school.—He now kept a public house, and I was surrounded with company the most of the time, who were ready to foster my natural levity, and help me forward in wickedness. I was a bright scholar in such a school, and made lamentable proficiency in sinning against God. O what a wonder of mercies that he did not hurl me down to hell.

In the spring I returned to work for Mr. F. and passed this summer much in the same state of mind, as I did the preceding. When I came to be more retired from young company, and occupied my leisure moments in reflecting on my past life, and the scenes

which were before me, I was often filled with horror. I made a great many vows to God if he would spare me another year, I would reform. I used frequently to visit the neighbourhood of my father, on the Sabbath, and associate with my companions in their recreations; but on my return in the "cool of the day," I was always condemned in my conscience, for what I had been engaged in, and would then vow to God, that I would never do so more. But my righteousness was like the morning dew, it soon passed away; my vows which I made, almost without number, were as often broken as I made them; and finally I became more careless and hardened than ever. In this state I passed along, sinning against God with a high hand until the spring of the year that I was seventeen years old. I was at this time at work with my father, learning his trade. Sometime in April I was interrupted in my course of hilarity and sensual gratifications.—Although I affected fearlessness and unconcern respecting the ultimate consequences of my career in another world, yet I was in reality, at times inexpressibly fearful of the result—and although I pretended to much knowledge and wisdom, yet in fact, I was ignorant and foolish in respect to the character and government of God, in the moral and natural world, and was, therefore, in a situation to be affected and tossed about with whimsical stories and old-wive's fables.

At this time a report was put in circulation, that an angel from heaven had made the solemn news known to some person, that a universal conflagration of nature would take place on the 16th of June ensuing.—If my memory serves me, there were pamphlets published, giving the particulars of this extraordinary revelation. If I had been a true believer in the word of God, I should have been ready to have met this ridiculous tale with Paul's declaration—"though an angel from heaven preach any other gospel, let him be accursed." But in the state of mind which I was then in, I had no *Divine assurance* of the authenticity of

the scriptures, produced in my mind, by the *influence of the Spirit of God on my heart*, but only a foreboding that the awful threatenings to the wicked, contained in them, were true ; and this conviction of their truth, was the result of extrinsic evidence, like the faith of those, who, in the days of Christ's manifestation in the flesh, believed in him because they saw the miracles which he wrought. But this is not saving faith. I was in great horror of mind, although I would not, for the world, have let any of my friends know I was in the least disturbed. I determined, however, to *reform entirely*. I read the bible some, and was watchful over my conversation and conduct; I thought I would endeavour to be ready for the event, if possible, if it should transpire, and went diligently to work to mend up the "*old garment*." Yet, so consummate was the pride of my heart, that I kept my concern hidden as much as possible, from those who were around me. The day finally came —I watched the wheels of nature closely in the fore part of the day, not knowing, but that before mid-day they would cease to move. But they rolled on as usual, and the sun ere long, was hidden below the western horizon. I felt my *distress removed*, as I suppose many poor deluded hypocrites do, when they *imagine their sins are forgiven*, and they are out of danger of hell. These were not my ideas, however, for I knew nothing even in theory, about the *necessity of our sins being forgiven*, in order to meet God in peace. My ideas ran altogether in the channel of *mending*, not thinking that it was important that the *back debt* should be cancelled. I grew happy and was transported. Poor wretch! how little *common sense* was manifested in thus not realizing that I was every *moment* in danger of dropping into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, where I should have been tormented forever and ever. I began again to give myself latitude in sin, and pursued my old course—astonishing depravity! yet so blind was I, that I had not the least apprehension that I was entirely depraved. O the long suffering of God

that he did not cut me down as a vile cumberer of the ground. I went on for some weeks taking my fill with sin, more hardened and more easy than ever.

But the time of my redemption drew nigh, when God was about to shew the power of his all-conquering grace, in turning the heart of one to himself, whom moral suasion, the use of means, fear of hell, &c. in *themselves considered*, had entirely failed to do: and one who, notwithstanding all the vows he had made—the horror of mind experienced on account of fearful apprehensions of hell, yet plainly manifested that he should go willingly and voluntarily down to the abodes of eternal despair, if his *heart* was not made subject to the creating power and energies of the Holy Ghost.

My father, at this time, was building a house for a neighbouring farmer, about one mile from his own place of residence. I was returning home one evening, and being fatigued and weary, I sat down to rest. It was a most pleasant and delightful evening in June, the moon being large, and shone almost as bright as day. I cast my eyes upwards, being attracted by the beauty, serenity, and sublimity of the scene which the natural heavens presented to my view. In a moment of time as I was gazing at the moon, I felt as I never did before. It will be impossible for me to find language to *express* my feelings. I seemed to look right into eternity. It seemed, comparatively speaking, like standing on the uttermost brink of an awful precipice, and looking off into an unfathomable abyss, where another hair's breadth progress, would plunge me. I had viewed these things and scenes afar off, and had trembled, and been filled with horror as I have already observed; but *now* it seemed to me as if the time had in reality come. It seemed as if I was then in eternity, and was standing before the awful throne of God—in fact, my *mind* was there. I do believe, that my feelings were almost as dreadful, for a short time, as those will be of damned sinners, when suddenly the trump of God shall sound and call them to judgment, and they shall see the Son of Man coming

and seated upon the throne of his glory. I had unutterably awful sensations. I do not recollect that I thought, at the first view which I had, a word about hell, or that I was in danger of it. But it was inexpressibly dreadful to me, to think of an *eternal existence* in heaven—eternity! eternity!! seemed so awful to me, that I could scarcely live with the view which I then had of it; indeed an eternal existence in heaven was to me the worst hell that could be conceived of. I knew not then, that the reason of this was, because my heart was opposed to God's holy moral character, and that in order for me to delight to dwell in a holy heaven, I must be changed in heart, or be born again. I was totally ignorant of this in theory. I do not remember that I had ever heard the doctrine of the new birth mentioned, and knew no more of it speculatively, than the uncivilized savages or Burmans, who never heard of the bible or the religion of Christ. God appeared to me a tremendously awful being, filling eternity—omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent in power, who sat upon the throne of the universe, but in whose character I could see *no beauty* at all. I seemed to be placed immediately before his throne, and saw there was no fleeing from his presence, and yet to *dwell* in his presence was to me the most tormenting situation that could be conceived of. O what folly for unregenerate sinners to expect to be happy in eternity. The new Jerusalem with the glory of God and the Lamb shining round about them, would wreck their souls with torture and horror to the very centre. They would call for rocks and mountains, yea, even hell itself, to fall on them and *hide* them from the face of him who sitteth on the throne of the universe.

This view which I had of the solemn realities of the eternal world, produced corresponding views of the shortness of time, and perishable nature of every thing around me. My last dying moments were made to appear to me as I would not have believed it possible, if I had not experienced it. It seemed as if all nature was dying around me—the heavens and the earth pass-

ing away, and the trump of God announcing the dreadful catastrophe. It appears to me my feelings could not have been much different, if these things had been actually transpiring. I was overwhelmed with horror—I knew not where to flee—I could see nothing permanent or substantial on which I could rest. I hastened home, but the moment I cast my eyes on my parents, brothers and sisters, I had such a sense of their mortal, dying state, that I could not endure the sight of them. Then did all flesh appear to me as grass indeed. How different were my sensations, from those which I had ordinarily experienced, when reflecting on the subject of death. Again I went to work to mend up my garment of self-righteousness, that I might be prepared to stand before the awful bar of God; for as I before observed, I had not the least thought that I must be born again or not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Accordingly I never expected or sought for any such thing. I could but be solemn, for I was filled with consternation continually. The judgment seat of Christ was always in my view—the archangel's trumpet seemed always sounding in my ears. From morning till evening I was almost driven to distraction—at night I dreamed of the burning up of the world, and the gathering of the nations of the earth before God in judgment.

I read the bible, but it was a sealed book, any farther than the threatenings contained in it, and its solemn declarations concerning the judgment and eternity, which subjects were so impressed on my mind by the power of God. All the while I do not remember that I had the least doubt but what I could work myself into the favour of God; nor had I apprehensions, that I remember, of finally going down to hell. But heaven and hell were all alike to me. Death and the grave were scenes more dreadful to me, than tongue of men or angels can ever describe. When I retired to bed, my last breath and dying moments would be brought so near to me, and so presented to my mind, that a trembling would seize me,

which seemed ready to wreck my mortal system, and shake every bone out of joint. I tried to pray to God, but I had no just views of the only way of access to God through a Redeemer. In short, I had no correct views respecting the plan of salvation through Christ. I had no one to instruct me. No person during my seriousness ever opened their mouth to me on the subject of religion. I never knew any thing about a revival of religion, nor did I know of a *young person* in the world, who was a professor of religion. I had heard there were young people, who had lately embraced religion in other parts of the country, but none within the circle of my acquaintance. There were a very few old people who professed religion, not far from where I lived, but I had no communication nor intercourse with them. Thus I continued for a number of weeks, seeking rest but finding none. I sought it by the works of the law, and instead of finding peace, Sinai's thunders were more and more terrible, and the trumpet waxed louder and louder. I did exceedingly fear and quake. It was difficult for me to attend to my work, and was obliged, some part of the time, to relinquish it, and retire to my bed. Mrs. R. manifested much concern for me, and was ready to administer medicine, conceiving me physically diseased. But I wanted the balm of Gilead, and the physician who cures the sin-sick soul, to administer to me the cordial of salvation. I kept going about to establish a righteousness of my own. I thought if I was baptized, and made a *profession* of religion, it would do me good. Accordingly I determined to attend meeting on fast-day, which was then near at hand, and request Elder S. to baptize me. I accordingly repaired to the meeting-house on that day, as full of distress and horror as ever. Death, judgment and eternity were constantly in my view. When the services were over, I intended to make my request known to the minister, and accordingly walked up to him, after he came out of the house, but could not get a word out of my mouth respecting the subject. Forever blessed be the name of

that God who watched over my path, and led me a blind sinner, by a way that I knew not, and preserved me from ruin. If I had made my request for baptism and admission into the church, I have no doubt but what I should have been received, and without a new heart too! O how many are probably ruined in this way! not seeking for anything farther, and are utterly deceived. How careful ought churches and ministers to be, in receiving members into the church, for, is it not probable, that many, when alarmed in their sins, put the *profession* of religion, in the *place of saving grace*, supposing that if they join a church and attend to the ordinances of the gospel, they shall be saved? I returned home as bad as I came; heavy laden indeed, and thus continued for some days. I remember of but a very short time (perhaps about an hour) that my distress was in the least abated, until I found peace in believing, and that was under the preaching of a minister who preached smooth things to the people. He was not an open Universalist, yet his preaching was calculated to lull impenitent sinners to sleep, on the brink of hell. O my God, what an account must such give in the day of eternity. This calm was of but short duration. At length the day of deliverance came. I was yet intent on baptism, in hope that it would relieve me of my distress, and once more made my calculations to have it accomplished. Elder S. preached in Johnson, about two miles from my father's; but he *resided* about five miles from thence. I proceeded early Sabbath morning (I think it was the last Sabbath in July, 1812,) on my journey toward his house, in order to converse with him before meeting, on the subject of joining the church and being baptized. I arrived at his house, but it seemed impossible for me to get in; my heart failed me, and I passed by. I proceeded some rods and turned about, thinking I would positively call on my return, but again I come short, and my resolutions failed me. I continued on slowly towards the meeting-house, which was about three miles distant, calculating to attend meeting,

which was appointed to commence at one o'clock. O the admirable goodness of God, who again preserved me from my own ways and prevented my ruin. On my return I had considerable leisure time for reflection. How wretched and miserable did I then feel. It seemed to me as if I failed in every thing which I undertook *to do*, and my own works failing me, I had nothing in all the universe to depend on. I was disconsolate, and frequently sat down by the way, to bewail my wretched state. I could see no beauty in anything around me, for the world had lost its charms, all creation seemed dying, and I myself on the borders of eternity, with nothing but horrible prospects before me. The hour appointed for meeting at length arrived, and I entered the house of worship. I never can describe what views I had of the judgment seat of Christ, when I cast my eyes up to the pulpit. I felt like one arraigned before that awful tribunal. It so happened that Elder S. exchanged this day with the Rev. Mr. W. of Scituate. I went into the gallery, sat down and heard him preach. His text, which I have always recollected, was Phil. iii. 10, but I do not know that I retained a word of his discourse, or understood ought that he said. He was a man noted for piety and practical godliness, of a venerable appearance, being about sixty-five years old, with hair as white as snow. After preaching he descended from the pulpit into the aisle, about the same time that I found my way there from the gallery. A number of old professors gathered around him and entered into conversation. One remarked to him that he had almost "got through the world," that he soon would finish his pilgrimage on earth. He replied, yes, and that he did not regret it—that he felt willing to die, &c. At that moment my soul bore witness to his words. The grave looked to me a delightful place, instead of being clothed with gloom, and death, judgment and eternity, lost all their horrible appearances, and so far from dreading them, I felt a desire to die, and launch into the eternal world. The poet's words

were expressive of my feelings in relation to the subject of death—

"Ah! lovely appearance of death."

I raised my eyes and looked on the minister who had been preaching, together with the hoary-headed pilgrims who stood by him conversing on the subject of religion, when lo! I beheld in them a *beauty* that I never saw in any beings before. They appeared to me altogether different from what Christians had done, and I felt a love for them and an attachment to them, which never can be described; and this because I considered them to be the children of God. How inexpressibly beautiful did the things of God and religion then appear to me, while at the same time I felt a peace of mind which to me was altogether new. All those feelings of horror and consternation of mind leaving me, and every wave of trouble which had been rolling in my bosom seemed hushed, and an unutterably sweet peace of mind ensued. I gazed on these new scenes and objects with infinite satisfaction and enjoyment, and listened attentively to every word which flowed from the lips of the saints of God. They tarried some time in the house, conversing together, but at length moved out, and I followed, for I felt concerning this company, as Ruth expressed herself to Naomi:—"Entreat me not to leave thee; or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go: and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried"! No one spake to me until after we had left the house, and I lingered along in the door yard, when two of the old brethren, (who were also natural brothers) accosted me, and enquired if I were seriously disposed. This was the first time that ever any mortal had addressed me on the subject of religion personally, and it pleased God that this first address should be made by one, whom I had before my seriousness ridiculed, and had entertained my ungodly

young companions by mimicking him; for he used to endeavour to preach, at which indeed he made rather miserable work; and besides, he was perhaps as far removed from natural beauty, as almost any man living. He was however of good character, and esteemed by the people as a pious Christian. Notwithstanding his natural uncouthness of manners and his forbidding aspect as it respected natural amiableness, yet when he addressed me, I thought if there was a being on earth more beautiful than the rest, he was the creature. O the ravishing amiableness which I beheld in his countenance. Some conversation passed, which I do not recollect, until his brother uttered these words: "there is no worthiness in us—the worthiness is all in Christ"—when at that instant I had such a glorious view or representation to my mind of the Lord Jesus crucified for sinners, as I cannot describe; at the same time having views of my own sinfulness, unworthiness and vileness. My heart went freely and willingly out to my Saviour, and I felt united to him by a love unutterable, and beheld an all-sufficiency in him to save my soul. O how willing I felt to trust myself in his arms, and how free his love and mercy appeared to flow to a ruined world.

How delicious were the words of the saints of God around me—some one of them mentioned the "good old apostles," and it seemed to me as if those words were sweeter to me "than the honey or honey comb." My mind in a moment was carried away to the Apostles, and I felt a love to them, although I had scarcely ever thought of them before, which was stronger than death. Every being whom I considered as bearing the moral image of God, appeared to me transcendantly beautiful. I saw an inexpressible beauty in holiness, which ravished my very soul. All the natural world seemed to declare the glory of God, and praise his holy name. One of the professors who stood by me made a remark that he would not exchange his hope in Christ for ten thousand worlds; and notwithstanding I was as consummately ignorant,

as I have before described, respecting the new birth, the plan of salvation through Christ the mediator—the interest in the covenant of grace, which those possess who truly believe in the Saviour; yet I felt to bear him witness, for it seemed impressed on my mind that I had obtained *something* more valuable than all perishable worlds, but knew not that I had then experienced the renovating influence of the Holy Spirit, creating me anew in Christ Jesus, for I was not looking for any such thing, nor did the thought enter my heart that it was a doctrine of the gospel. I parted from my agreeable company and made my way towards home, and felt almost like flying on the wings of faith over the pleasant plain to my father's house. I remember one thought very distinctly that occurred to my mind on my way. It appeared to me that I could make all my giddy, careless young companions, see things as I saw, and could persuade them to forsake their sins and turn to God. It appeared to me they would all believe my testimony. I felt a love to all mankind, and wanted to do them good. There grew in the way which I travelled home, an apple tree, which produced very early fruit, and which was then ripe, and as I felt a strong desire to do good, and felt as if I wanted to give something to my young companions who were deriding me for my seriousness, I filled my pockets with some of the apples, for that purpose, for I had no money. I felt a benevolent spirit and feeling towards mankind, that I had been hitherto an utter stranger to, and this towards my enemies too, if I had any. But a short time after this I begged of my mother some cake and wine, and visited the poor house in our town, where I passed a considerable part of the day with those who were lingering out their lives in poverty and distress. In short there seemed to be a radical change, wrought in me, my trouble of mind was gone, I felt at peace with God, and a glorious peace within, the wind had blown but I knew not from whence it came nor whither it had gone! Forever blessed be

the name of God, who was found of one who sought him not.

Reflections on the foregoing.

How is it possible for any Christian to say understandingly, that his *experience* teaches him *Arminianism. It now looks to me passing strange that I should ever have been entangled as I have been with this unscriptural system, when my own experience *proves* it to be false. Indeed I never should have been, if the true system of salvation, by *grace alone*, had not been misrepresented to me, as I shall show in the sequel, together with the fact, that the remains of selfishness and pride in my heart grew and were nourished by being fed by this doctrine. Now let me ask the reader if it would not have been *perfectly just* in God to have cut me off in my sins long *before* I was converted, and sent me down to hell. How long I continued in sin and rebelled against the government of heaven! How many vows I had broken—how many serious impressions I had grieved away. Now if God had suffered me to have perished in my sins, must I not have acknowledged my condemnation just? If not, how would there be any *grace* in saving me? For surely, if justice did not *condemn* me, it *must save* me; and if the *justice* of God saves me, my salvation *cannot be of grace.* This I think is clear. Well, admitting God might have justly and consistently with his moral perfections and attributes, cut me down as a cumberer of the ground, and poured out his awful wrath and indignation on me forever, for those sins which I freely and voluntarily committed against him, would it have altered the state of *my case*, and rendered my condemnation *unjust*, if he had for *infinitely wise and holy purposes*, and to answer some valuable end in the government of the moral world, through grace saved

*I wish the reader to read the preface, and learn my *reasons* for using the terms *Arminianism*, *Arminians*, &c.

another sinner as vile and guilty as myself? Let this be weighed in the reader's mind. Would this, I say, have taken away *my guilt*, or rendered my condemnation unjust? I beg to know how. Would it not still have remained true that I had sinned freely and of my own accord, for a long time against God? And not only that, but despised and refused, month after month and year after year, offered mercy. Now I humbly beg of the reader not to suffer prejudice or anger, (for people are frequently angry at the truth) to prevent his attention to this subject until he can give a satisfactory answer in his own mind. Suppose there are two criminal murderers—both guilty, vile transgressors, and deserve to die—the government executes one, but to answer a valuable purpose or end *to the government*, (and not out of partiality, or a selfish respect of persons to the criminal) the other is pardoned. Would such a proceedure prove that the one who suffered, suffered unjustly? Would it take away his sins? Would it be thus made to appear that he had not murdered? Every person of common sense knows better. And are there not such cases frequently transpiring? But when we tell Arminians that all men are guilty before God and justly deserve eternal damnation, on account of sins which they have freely and voluntarily committed, (which by the way they own to be the truth thus far) and not only that, but that they all with one consent, when left to themselves, (see Luke xiv.) wickedly reject the mercy of God offered to them in the gospel, and affirm also that God *will* have a seed to serve him—that he *will* give unto his Son souls for his hire, and as a reward for his sufferings; that he *shall see* the travel of his soul and be satisfied in the salvation of many sinners, while others are left to suffer what they *justly deserve*, (and they cannot deny it) they say we represent God as a partial being, horribly unjust, a wicked respecter of persons, &c. *I* say this comes near to horrible blasphemy. If we represented that all the *motive* God had in view in saving sinners, was the sinner's own

personal benefit or good, there would seem to be rather more colour of candour in their assertions. Indeed many appear to talk and write as if there could be nothing more in view, in the Divine mind, in saving them, than their own *individual* happiness and exaltation. Reader, art thou of this description? I beg of thee for a moment to consider what thou art. We are worms—vile worms too—specks in creation. Consider also the character of Him who inhabits eternity; perfect in holiness, fearful in praises, a God doing wonders—the great omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent God. And do you think that this Being will lose sight of the glory of his own great name, and the *general good* of his intellectual beings, to subserve the individual ends of our little sinful selves? No. If he saves us, it will be for the glory of his own great name, and for the greatest *general good* of the universe: And if he condemns us, it will be because we have sinned against him, and *justly deserve it.* And herein his justice will also be glorified. We ought to beware how we call this unjust and wickedly partial.

When I review my own experience and that of others, and ask myself questions like the following, it proves to me, as I before observed, Arminianism to be false (for they say the *creature* turns the point of his salvation*) and I do believe if all Christians would do the same, candidly; the result would be the same with them also. Why did I not obtain religion one year or one month before I did obtain it? Was it because I did not need it then? No. Was it because it was not offered to me freely? No. Was it because I *could not* have obtained it before, *if I would?* No such thing. Did I grow any better by waiting, or rather continuing to rebel awfully against a good and holy God, so that when I did obtain it, I was better prepared, (by nursing and cherishing the *good thing in me*) to accept salvation? If so, then continuing in sin made me more

* See Fletcher, Whitby and others.

holy!! Besides, when I was arrested by the power of God with that conviction which never left me until I was born again, I was pursuing a course of sin and rebellion against God, with *renewed* and *increased* vigour. The reason evidently was this:—My heart was fully set in me to do evil. I hated God, and rejected salvation, which was offered to me in the gospel—and this, too, I did freely and voluntarily, with all my heart. Well; *now* the question occurs—how came I to turn to God and believe the gospel *when I did?* Now the way which Arminians evade this question, (which, if properly and fairly answered would at once overthrow their system) is generally below the character of fair reasoning. They will say I was then *willing* to accept salvation. This we all admit. I have no idea that any person has religion before he is willing. But how came I to be willing *then*, or what was the *cause* or *reason* of my being *more willing* then, than I was six months before? I ask the reader to forget his own particular creed, prepossessions and prejudices, and tell me if *this* was not the sole and only reason, viz. God dealt *differently* with me from what he ever did before. Why was it that those who were pricked in the heart on the day of Pentecost obtained religion *then*, and not before? Might they not have come before, *if they would?* Most certainly—for undoubtedly Christ himself before his crucifixion personally preached to many of them. And was he not as good and as powerful a preacher as Peter was? Yea; he spake as never man spake; but they *would not* hear him. He worked miracles—but still they would not believe. But now what is the matter? Peter, an unlearned and illiterate fisherman, preached a few minutes and about three thousand were suddenly converted to God, and were filled with faith and the Holy Ghost. Now what was the *cause* of their being willing to obey Christ *now*, under this short discourse of Peter, when they had been resisting Christ's *own* testimony, or per-

secuting him, some of them probably unto death *before?* Had their hearts grown any better by nailing the Son of God to the accursed tree!!

Let us compare the experiences of God's people with the Arminian notion that man turns the point of his own salvation by nourishing and fostering that grace in him, until by his labours it is raised to a holy flame, and he becomes a good Christian. I ask you, reader, if you are a Christian, to review your own exercises, and see how this argument will stand. How came *you* to have a hope in Christ, when thousands born under the same dispensation, enjoying the same privileges, reject salvation, and wilfully and constantly urge their passage down to hell? Is it because you were *naturally* any better than they? This I presume you will not assert.—But if you should, who made you better? So this will not remove the difficulty. Were you wiser, or did you possess stronger natural and intellectual powers than they? This will not be urged by you as a reason for a moment. But *you*, that is, *yourself* improved the grace given you better than they did; so *you* have turned the point of your own salvation. This perhaps you will give me for an answer.—Well; in what did the good improvement of yours consist, which so much exceeded theirs? In the exercise of a better memory or judgment than theirs? You will answer, No. It must consist then in a heart exercise. Well, was there some little spot in your heart (to use a metaphorical expression) abstract from the grace of God, where the grace of God, or the Holy Spirit, when it was given to you, found a ready reception and a quiet resting place, and so was "nourished and cherished" and improved? If so, you certainly had *some goodness or holiness* before you had the grace of God imparted to you!!! And if so, did not your fellow sinner have the same? And if he did possess the same, why did not the grace of God find that good spot in *his heart?* And why did not *he* nourish it and improve it as well as you?

But you say, perhaps, you abhor such a thought: you never had any goodness in you, until it was produced in you or imparted to you by the Holy Spirit. Well; did not your fellow sinner have the same imparted to *him*, and why did not the same consequences ensue, and *he* become a Christian? Was it because the *bad part* of *you* made a better improvement of the grace of God, than the *bad part of him!!!* Perhaps you will say you have done nothing of yourself; but all which you have done has been done by the assistance of divine grace.—This is well enough, if rightly understood. But I desire to know if you ever look into this subject? What do you mean by the assistance which you have from God? Do you mean that God assists you like one person assisting another in performing a piece of labour—you do a part and God does the rest? Or like one person trying to raise a certain weight from the ground. He can raise it all, saving a few pounds; some one assists him, and *they two together* raise the weight. So you carry part of the burden, and God takes the rest. If so, he must exercise a power *short* of omnipotent power. And does God ever exert any power short of omnipotent power? It would be well to consider this before we make assertions. Or do you mean that God pours his grace in among your unsanctified affections, and so reduces them down, like pouring water in among ardent spirits, thus adulterating them? Is this your idea of the grace of God assisting you? Then I would ask what state are your affections or heart in at this time before you experience religion? According to this idea, they are neither good nor bad, holy nor unholy; you neither love God nor hate him; you neither sin nor let it alone!!! O what a system—surely men of sense would never have embraced it, if they had looked at its absurdities—had they not hated the bible doctrine that sinners lie wholly at the discretion of God, whether to save them or not—that he has a *perfect right*, as sovereign of the universe, to do either; and that if

does save any, it will be of his *mere mercy and grace alone*, without any works of righteousness of the creature mingled therewith.

The plain truth is, men before regeneration are entirely corrupt in heart, opposed to God, and have not the least particle of holiness in them. God certainly *strives with them* and calls upon them to repent:—"Behold I stand at the door and knock." But holiness, grace, or the Spirit of God, is no more *in* the sinner's heart before regeneration, than the man is in the house while the door is shut and he stands without knocking. Sinners are not like the inanimate creation, neither—they are not like stocks and stones. They are as *active* as saints—but all their action is *against* God. They freely and voluntarily oppose his government with all their hearts, continually, and as freely refuse to accept salvation on the humiliating terms of the gospel. And this every one of them, without a single exception, will continue to do until forever lost, if God does not interpose with his almighty power and all conquering grace, and change their hearts, and cause them to be *willing* to be saved in his own appointed way. This is the true state of the case—it is agreeably with the experience of all truly converted souls, and abundantly testified to by scripture. This is the only plan that makes the salvation of those who are saved entirely of grace, and the condemnation of those who are lost to rest on their own heads. For as I before observed, the Arminian sentiment puts the turning point of salvation with the creature; and this turning point must be abstract or independently of the grace of God; for observe, the creature *himself* improves that grace communicated to him, *they* say,* and so makes his salvation certain. So that he *of himself* differs from another, and of course the reason why he is saved is, because *he has worked* a work that some of his fellow sinners, who were just as good as himself, have not

*See Fletcher, as transcribed in the Free Will Baptist Magazine.

worked; and I ask the candid reader if this is not maintaining salvation to be of our work? I should be as willing to preach salvation by works, as salvation by *a work*. Now *we* affirm, that *if* a man shall keep the law, he shall live—but we cannot find the man. We also affirm that sinners ought to love God; they ought to repent without delay, it is their duty, and they may if they will.—But we affirm they *will not*—so we say the turning point of salvation lies with God. And this, as I before observed, is not only agreeable to scripture, and the experience of the saints, but with the prayers of Arminians themselves. I never heard any who were spiritual pray, but what they prayed in this very strain, and bore witness to this doctrine.—They pray to God to change the hearts of sinners—to arrest them by his mighty power, and to cause them to submit—to bring them down, and that too *this moment;* and call for the power of God to be displayed in killing and making alive, in slaying sinners and creating them anew in Christ Jesus; and after all, if any one uses the very same ideas in argument with them, as they express in prayer to God, they think it horrible, and presume to confound him without ceremony, by calling him a Calvinist! But let us examine God's word, and review our experiences in the dealings of God with our souls, and embrace truth, let it be called by what name it will. Perhaps the reader, if he be an Arminian, will come forward with declamation that this makes God a partial being, in representing him as dealing differently with men. I beg of him not to be forward in digging this pit, lest he fall into it himself. I do not purpose to attend to this objection *here*, but will refer the reader to Chapter IX. where I conceive it to be fully answered, and where, I trust, it will appear beyond controversy, that if this system of religion makes God a partial being, Arminianism does the same; so that if we throw away one on *this account*, we must the other.

2. In reflecting on my experience at the time just alluded to, I have satisfactory and good evidence, that

I experienced a real change of heart. It was that which I did not expect or look for; for, as I have before said, I did not know any thing about the new birth in *theory*. So that this marvellous change was wrought in me *unexpectedly*—and I am confident that I did not *merely imagine it*. If I had been theoretically orthodox, and had been looking for the forgiveness of my sins through Christ, or the new birth, there would have been more *probability* of my having been imposed upon by the enemy of all righteousness, in working on my imagination, and in my thinking that the thing had really taken place, which I so eagerly sought for. Nor did I imagine that I heard any audible voice, like the voice of a person speaking to me, and telling me my sins were forgiven. But I first realized this *great change* in my *affections*, which I have related—and how beautiful did God's character then look to me, for the first time, and how I loved his children! I was then led out in my mind as I have stated, to behold Jesus Christ as he is exhibited in the gospel. I did not *first* believe on Jesus Christ, and have my sins forgiven—and then love God *because* he had forgiven my sins, and I expected he would save me. No: if this be the way that God saves sinners, I *am still without hope*. But I first experienced this great and glorious change, whereby I loved God; and I then acted faith on the atonement, and saw the way of salvation through Christ.

From hence I am led, in reviewing my experience, to fall in with Mr. Fuller, in his views of saving faith —that it is a holy exercise, and have read him with great satisfaction on this subject, as I have also Dr. Bellamy, than whom, no writer has, perhaps, more successfully shewn the dangers of that system, which in substance amounts to this: "*that a man's sins are forgiven him, if he really believes they are, or if he fully believes that Christ died for him in particular.*" Now we may believe many things to be true, which are false, and it is to be feared that many in the great day will find that they have believed a lie, in thinking their

sins were forgiven. To say a person's sins are forgiven, before he loves God, is to say that he may be saved without love to God—for what will condemn a person when his sins are all forgiven? And it also implies that we may have saving, justifying faith in Jesus Christ, without one particle of true love to God or the Divine law; and how does this agree with the scripture account of saving faith? The bible says that "faith works by love;" and that "faith without works is dead." Repentance is before forgiveness, and true repentance, that is, a *godly sorrow* for sin, implies love to the Divine law. A person may have, and perhaps all sinners do have, at times, what is sometimes termed, a *legal repentance*, without true love to the Divine law—Judas, no doubt, had it—but this is not the repentance "*unto life, that needeth not to be repented of.*" Let us be sure that we have a godly sorrow for sin.—It is the duty of all men this moment, to love God, consequently their duty to unfeignedly repent, for having transgressed the law—and it is their duty thus to believe on the Son that they may have life. But let them not, (to use a vulgar expression) get this story "precisely wrong end foremost," and believe that God forgives their sins while they hate him, and then after they think he has forgiven them, shift ground, and love him merely *because* he has paid *this attention* to them!!

CHAPTER III.

Public profession of religion—Misconstruction of the subject of bearing the cross—Lukewarmness in Religion—Was taught the Arminian system of theology, &c. &c.

My love for God's people *now* inclined me to their company. I had of choice rather be a door keeper in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the tents of wickedness and sin. I felt a desire to be baptized

and make a public profession of religion, because wisdom's ways were pleasant. I had no idea at that time of the numerous different denominations in the world, nor of the conflicting sentiments on theology, which existed among the professed people of God. I do indeed recollect of hearing something said respecting the Six Principle and the Five Principle *Baptists*, but I had no conception of the difference, or in what it consisted. It will be hardly possible for the reader to imagine my ignorance on these topics at the time of my conversion. The Six Principle Baptists were the only professors with whom I was acquainted, as I have before hinted, and of those there were but very few in the region where I resided, who were also in appearance very low in religion. One of their preachers preached one sermon in a month, in the neighbourhood, or to speak, perhaps, as properly, repeated the same thing over so often ; for although he appeared to be an honest, well-minded man, yet his talents were below mediocrity, naturally, besides which he was confined all the week working at the shoemaker's trade, which naturally occasioned a sameness in his discourses. I put, at this time, almost unlimited confidence in professors of religion, and particularly ministers, and supposed that whatever they asserted must be correct. As I desired to make a profession of religion, I applied to the church nearest to me, which was that of the Six Principle Baptists,in Johnson, under the care of Elder S. I knew not what would be required of me, in order to become a member, for as for relating experiences, I never had even heard of the thing, nor did I know what appellation to give to my own exercises, and knew not *speculatively* that there was such a doctrine in the bible as a change of heart ; so that when I was asked a few days after I had experienced religion, how long it was since I met with a change, I answered about two months, alluding to the time I was first awakened. When, however, a few weeks after I was baptized, I heard an experience related, and a Christian describing the work of grace

on the heart, my mind in a moment was carried back to the time and place where I experienced the *same* exercises, and then I knew what was meant by a religious experience, or a change of heart, and felt assured that I had experienced it myself. When I was informed by the minister, in covenant meeting, that if I wished to join the church there was liberty for me to speak, I arose, but did not say one word. After standing mute a few moments I was asked a few questions, the import of which I do not remember, but I gave some kind of an answer, and was without hesitation admitted as a member of the church, and went forward the next day, (which I think was the 1st Sabbath in August, 1812,) in the ordinance of Baptism, received the imposition of hands, and partook of the Lord's supper. The imposition of hands on private members of the church is tenaciously held to by Six Principle Baptists, as an ordinance of the gospel. The very *easy manner* in which I was received into the church has since given me reason to believe that I should as readily have been received before I experienced religion, as I was at this time, if I had offered myself. Nothing but the watchful care of a gracious and merciful God prevented me. How many are there within the pales of the visible churches in christendom who have not got the wedding garment on? O how dangerous. Such ones are generally fatally deceived. They please themselves with the idea that they have got religion, and are consequently deaf to the threatenings of God's law. If they pass on and maintain their *external walk* and profession in the world, yet how soon will they hear from the mouth of Christ, "I never knew you." But frequently, such, openly rebel, return like a dog to his vomit again, and then some people say they have fallen from grace!! I had now just passed the age of seventeen, and was married August the 16th, the next Sabbath following the one on which I was baptized. I felt a strong desire to speak to the people, and my young companions in particular, to try to persuade them to flee from the wrath

to come. I never had heard at that time of a conference meeting, in which the people of God had the privilege to improve their gifts in exhortation, prayer, &c. but supposed that if I spoke at all I must preach. Accordingly, I gave out an appointment that I would preach Sabbath evening, the week after I was baptized! Strange to tell, I was approbated and encouraged in this, by the professors around me. This being an extraordinary circumstance, the people flocked in crowds to the meeting-house, to witness the novel scene. I have no recollection of what I said, only of warning them to beware of too much heat and engagedness in their political contentions. I was a poor ignorant boy, having never read but a very little in the bible, and had no distinct correct ideas, *speculatively*, of the doctrine it contained. I had the work of God, to be sure, on my soul, but what to *denominate* it, or how to express myself on one single point of scripture truth, I knew no more, perhaps, than a savage or Burman, who should be converted where the bible never had been seen, and the preaching of the gospel never had been heard. Notwithstanding this, I felt strongly impressed with the idea, that I must preach the gospel. I made another appointment the Sabbath following, and attended, which ended my preaching for the present. I have often lamented that I had not had proper instruction at that time to have improved my gift, in conference meetings, if there should have been opportunity, instead of attempting to preach: I might have kept along and grown in the improvement of my gift, and not have closed my lips in silence as I did, for more than three years following. But it was too much a fashion with the order of people with whom I had connected myself, to make preachers of almost all who opened their mouths in public, although they possessed nothing but exhortation gifts. This is a sad mistake. It is the means of putting many a one into the pulpit as expounders of the word, whom God never called there, and who have nothing but a gift of exhortation. And on the

other hand, it is the means of many keeping silence who should at proper times give a word of exhortation; for having felt it a duty to *speak*, and feeling incompetent to *preach*, they say nothing at all. This was the case with me, for after having attended two meetings, and attempting to preach, I became discouraged, in this course, and never opened my mouth in public on the subject of religion for more than three years afterwards, as I have before hinted. To my shame be it spoken, I did not even pray in my family. Satan about this time obtained a strange advantage over me in another way, which tended more still to discourage me. Some one handed me a book entitled "No Cross no Crown;" written, if my memory serves me, by William Penn. I know not but the book is well enough, although I do not now recollect much about the contents, but at any rate either through my *misunderstanding*, or some faults in the *work itself*, Satan made it a means of great injury to me. The inference which I drew from it was, that I must *cross myself* in every thing which I had a *desire* to do, without making any distinction between holy and unholy desires, or between that which the law of God forbid or required. Accordingly I had to take up my cross and deny myself, and not attend meeting the next Sabbath, for my heart had been much set upon it and I had a strong desire to attend, but my book said "No Cross no Crown," and as I did not feel willing to lose my crown, I took up my cross and went into the woods on Sabbath, and there remained all day!! I felt lamentably bad. But I thought the reason was that I did not faithfully bear the cross. My book said, "No Cross no Crown," so I thought I must do every thing which I did not *want to do*. Accordingly, although I did not want to leave the shade and go sit down in the sun, yet I must do it, for my book said, "No Cross no Crown." Thus the Devil tempted me in the wilderness; and here I continued all day *scorching* in the sun, bearing the cross as I verily thought, in hopes of obtaining the crown. As night

came on I felt most miserably. I desired to return home—but this would not be bearing the cross. I must therefore continue there all night. Some how or other I obtained mitigation, so far as to start for home. (I suppose I *abrogated* the severity of the cross.) But I had not gone far before I thought I must turn about and go back, inasmuch as *this* would be the most *disagreeable* thing to me almost imaginable, and I drew the inference from the book, that I must not do *one thing* which was agreeable, but the cross consisted in doing every thing which was *disagreeable.* So I turned and run back, until by some means or other I obtained respite, so as again to return towards home: but I had not proceeded but a short distance before the Devil gave me orders to again wheel about and make my way once more into the woods, and in this way he kept me pacing back and forth perhaps twenty times before I got so far extricated as to get home—and I think then the only means whereby I obtained freedom from the *cross* of tarrying in the woods all night, was by taking up another, almost as *disagreeable;* which was to appear at the residence of my wife, whom I had just married, and where I expected to meet some of her relatives from a distance, whom I had never seen, clad in my shabby working apparel, with no handkerchief around my neck, with the addition also of turning my shirt collar under, so far out of sight that I appeared rather as if I had no shirt on at all! This was disagreeable to me, but my book said, "No Cross no Crown," and I therefore concluded to bear it. This circumstance may appear to some too unutterably foolish to relate, but it is for this *very purpose* that I here mention it—to shew what consummate fools the Devil sometimes makes of young converts. I was at the same time that this happened, sincere, and would not for the world have done any thing offensive to God; but as I have before observed, I was ignorant, and altogether unacquainted with Satan's devices, so that he easily obtained this advantage over me, in my tender state of inex-

perience in the Christian warfare. I had not learned to try the spirits by the unerring word of God. Notwithstanding this course, which the Devil led me on this day, appears so foolish, yet I believe it to be of the very same nature with all religious enthusiasm or fanaticism. What is the Shaker delusion but this?—Although some of it may appear at first view more plausible; yet search it to the bottom and it is the same thing. And so with all fanatics, who have ever appeared on the stage. God overruled this day finally, to his own glory and my good; for, norwithstanding I did not *then see* through the delusion, yet some years after, when Douglass Farnum and his followers began their course of running round the chimney of the house, perhaps three hours on a stretch—crawling on the floor—sitting down under the table, like dogs, and numberless other bodily exercises and movements, not only disgraceful to them as men and women, but abominably so as professors of the Christian religion, I was prepared to reject it as a delusion of the Devil. This Farnum was a preacher of what is termed the Christian connexion, and for a while seemed successful as an instrument of a great revival of religion.

We cannot be too careful to try all our impressions and exercises by the word of God. After this Sabbath which I spent in bearing the cross in the manner aforesaid, I grew more discouraged in endeavouring to attend any religious duty. No doubt but this was one grand design of the enemy in thus leading me on a wrong track, worrying me, and so tempting me to believe there was no enjoyment, in bearing the cross of Christ. How many does he thus deceive, whose hearts have never been changed. They are alarmed through fear of eternal punishment, and feel willing *to do* any thing to escape it, and thus he sets them at work as he did me; until they are satisfied there is no help or comfort in such exercises, and finally reject them as delusions, and with them the whole of religion also. But thanks be to God, who, with every temptation which his *chil-*

dren meet with, he also makes a way for their escape. As I grew discouraged, I soon began to partake of the spirit of the world, and to settle down in lukewarmness. I was young and just married, and soon conceived the idea of obtaining something of this world's goods, for comfort "when a rainy day should come," or old age should creep on, &c. About this time the brethren began to doctrinate me. I was warned to beware of Calvinism as a "*hydra-headed monster*," which, if he got his iron grasp once hold on me, would prove my ruin. As they had no writings of their own denomination on doctrinal subjects, I was supplied with books written by the Methodists. Calvinism was represented to me as being made up of sentiments like the following:—

That God was the *sinful author* of moral evil or sin. That men were bound, by irresistible decrees of fatality, to do just as they did, although they might be ever so *willing* to do differently. That the atonement was limited to a part of mankind. That God chained mankind, by his decrees; like a person's being chained to a post or tree, and then commanded them to come to him; and because they did not come, condemned them for it to hell. That a part of mankind *could not come* to Christ, although ever so *willing* to come. That a part *must come*, although ever so *unwilling*, and be compelled to go to heaven like a man dragged to prison, with his legs tied, contrary to his wishes. That those who were once converted must go to heaven, let them do as they would afterwards—and finally, that it made no difference what a person did after he was once converted, he must be saved, although he should live in sin all his days, and *should not* endure to the end? Horrible picture thought I; and so it really was. I was not told that there was any difference in the opinions of those who were *denominated* Calvinists, but that the above constituted the main pillars of the system; of all who were ranked under that head. This to be sure was dreadful heresy. I *knew* that God was holy, and could not be the sinful

author of moral evil. I *knew* that man was a free moral agent, and that no decree of God hindered him from acting as he chose to act. I *knew* that the atonement was amply sufficient to save the whole world; for the scripture was full on this point, and all were invited to come to Christ and be saved; and that if any were not saved, who lived under the gospel, it was because they obstinately rejected offered mercy. I knew also that the scripture declaration was, that those alone who endured to the end, should be saved, and that the promise was to none else. These ideas were clear in my mind *as they now are;* and as they told me these were Arminian ideas, I thought to be sure that Arminianism was a bible doctrine, (and *so far* it is,) and received it implicitly. They never told me that there were tens of thousands of Christians who were denominated Calvinists, that held to all these points as positively as Arminians did. That however, there were some who were so called, that believed in a particular atonement, or that limited it to the elect, and whose ideas of the decrees of God, and of the *natural inability* of man, did, indeed reduce the system of God's government in the moral world, to a kind of fatality, and made the creature like a stock or stone, or rather a mere machine; yet, there were others, who, notwithstanding they were called by the same name, yet believed altogether differently, viz:—That God's decrees do not rob the creature of his free moral agency, but that they established it. That all men always act just as they choose to act, all things considered, or they are not accountable. That the atone ment is general *in its nature*, and amply sufficient to save ten thousand times as many sinners as ever did or ever will exist, if they *would only receive it* by faith.—That salvation is offered sincerely, and freely, and indiscriminately to all. That whosoever will come, may come and partake of the waters of life freely. That there is no extrinsic cause, or nothing out of the creature that hinders his coming to Christ, if he did not reject salvation, freely offered to him with all his heart.

Of *this* I was never informed; nor was I told that these people held to *both sides* of the truth, whereas Arminians held to but *one side*. That notwithstanding it is true that men are free moral agents; that the atonement is general, and opens a door of salvation through which all men may come to Christ and heaven, *if they will*, and that all are invited in the gospel declaration *to come*, yet they did not tell me that all men are so desperately wicked, and their hearts so fully set in them to do evil, that when Christ crucified is preached to them, and salvation most freely offered to them, and they invited to come to his arms, they all universally, if left to themselves, without a *single exception*, with *one consent*, will make an excuse, and willingly and wilfully refuse this offered grace. And that not one single individual of the whole family of man ever will *consent* to submit to Christ, and receive his salvation, if God, does no more towards it than what the Arminian system tells about. That is, if he does not by his all-conquering and almighty grace change their hearts, and thus *cause* them to be *willing* to do what they before were utterly opposed to doing with all their hearts, although they *might* have done it *if they would*, viz:—come to Christ.—This was never told me—and here I was deceived; and although I do not excuse myself for embracing this error, yet when I think how plausibly the Arminian system was held up to me, and at the same time how the truth was misrepresented and clad with the dreadful word *Calvinism;* and Arminianism, also, being so pleasing to the *natural heart*, and of course to the remains of sin in me, it is not much to be wondered at that I did. I now began to dispute on doctrinal points, with vehemence. I had learned the Arminian song—whosoever will come may come, (by which I always meant that nobody but the Arminians did believe so,) I talked about the horrible decrees, the iron chains of fatality, God's partiality, &c. which *some people* held to, as I said, and of the dreadful *dangerous doctrine of the saint's perseverance*, although I

had got completely settled down into a backslidden state from God, in heart. What strange inconsistency was here? Advocating a system of doctrines which lays the stress of the creature's salvation on his *own faithfulness*, abstract or independently of the grace of God, (for the Arminians teach that our salvation depends on *our faithfulness in improving grace*, instead of its depending on God's grace, *causing* us to improve our talents,) and yet living in a state of abominable lukewarmness and almost total neglect of all religious duties! I soon arrived to that state that I spent the Sabbath in visiting and recreations, when there was no meeting in the neighbourhood; and for a considerable time made a point of attending meeting only about once a month. I attended no church meetings, nor covenant meetings, nor prayed but very little in secret, or indeed at all. I became again much taken up with politics, and almost every day engaged in warm arguments on that subject. I assisted in raising liberty poles, rallying around them, and firing salutes, and was excessively fond of military parades, being myself a member of an independent company. In this manner I passed along for more than two years. To be sure, I felt, notwithstanding all my backslidings, at times, much troubled in mind, and filled with horror in view of danger—and also felt an attachment to, and regard for the cause of religion, which I did not feel before my conversion, and thought I would not for the world wound the cause; and if temporal assistance was wanted, I was ready to contribute, as far as I was able; yet, I was so blinded by sin that I was not aware that I was *really wounding the cause every day*, and lived more like a Heathen than I did like a Christian. During all this time I never had a word of reproof from the church to which I belonged, nor from one of the individual members; but on the contrary, I have reason to believe I was held in high estimation by them, as a wholesome member and faithful Christian. And *this* was the faithfulness, according to the doctrine which they

taught me, and inculcated, on which my eternal salvation depended!!! O my God, what strange infatuation! What blindness to the requirements of God's holy law! What horrible blasphemy (I was about to say) to substitute *such obedience* and *faithfulness* in the place of Jesus Christ! What can be more abominable in the sight of God?

During this time I was awakened one night out of my sleep by my wife, who was walking the room in great distress of mind, on account of seeing her lost and undone state, and begged of me to pray for her. For such a scene as this I was not prepared, and therefore put her off with the exhortation to pray for herself, &c. I prayed not at all in my family, nor gave my wife nor children any religious instruction.—The reflection pains me this moment, and I have had much sorrow of heart and bitter repentance on account of this state of declension and departure from God, which I so long most wickedly and ungratefullly indulged in; and I am now convinced that it was owing to the mere mercy and grace of God alone, yes, to the truth of *that doctrine* which I was then despising, that I was not *finally* left to myself, and to perish everlastingly in my backslidings and sins. But the covenant was ordered in all things and sure; and although I was suffered thus far to fall as a just *chastisement* for my self-conceit and the pride of my heart, in trusting in myself; yet he did not suffer his faithfulness to fail, but, as he did in Peter's case, so in mine, ere long looked me again into repentance--healed my backslidings, and manifested himself to me as he does not unto the world. O the long-suffering, goodness, grace, and mercy of God! "How great is his goodness and how great is his beauty."

Reflections.

In reflecting on the foregoing chapter, the state of mind described, which I was in for more than two years, how plainly do I see the entire falsity of that ar-

gument frequently used by Arminians, that the doctrine which they inculcate of falling from grace, if received by young converts, has a salutary influence on their minds to preserve them from backsliding; and that the contrary doctrine of the saint's perseverance, has a very bad effect by producing a spirit of lukewarmness, degeneracy, &c. This statement may appear plausible to many, but with me it is vague, unfounded, and futile.

The old proverb, that experience is the best schoolmaster, will hold good here, in respect to myself. I have tried for myself and am satisfied. Perhaps no person ever more fully believed the doctrine of falling from grace than I did at this time, and some time after. I did not indeed, believe it, as I now believe the *saint's perseverance*, and I must be permitted to say that no person under heaven *thus* believes it. *One* reason why I believed it was because I did not *understand* it in all its consequences. That is, I did not fully see that it placed the turning point of salvation, (if I may so speak) in the *creature's* hands, instead of founding it in the promise of God. *Another reason* why I believed it was because I at the time, knew but little about the *native deceitfulness* of my heart. If I had known *then* what I know *now* respecting *this*, I should have said at once, if the doctrine of falling from grace is true, there is not only a *possibility of my falling* finally away, but I *am sure* that I shall be (after all that God has done for me) lost in hell. Another and powerful reason why I believed this doctrine was because the *contrary doctrine* of the saint's perseverance, was *completely misrepresented* to me. Instead of being instructed that by it the people of God, on first believing in Christ, were represented as being interested in a covenant of grace, which, by the immutable promise of God, secured their final perseverance *in holiness* to the end; I was told that the ideas of those who held this doctrine were; that those, who were once converted, would be saved, *whether they endured to the end or not.* That although they continued

in sin all their days after conversion, it made no difference, they would die and go directly to heaven!—This I knew was not the doctrine of scripture or reason, and it was this *misrepresentation* of truth which was one reason, as I have before observed, which occasioned my reception of error and continuance in it. Are there not thousands in the same condition? Now, as I have just remarked, I do not *thus* believe the doctrine of the saint's perseverance. I do not believe it *because I do not understand it* in its consequences—For I trust God has given me so to see the native depravity and exceeding sinfulness of the human heart, as it is represented in the sacred word, as it is acted out by mankind in general, but more especially as I have seen my own, that I am sure if God has not made an immutable promise to *cause* his people to prove finally faithful—not one soul will ever reach heaven. But the doctrine I understand to amount to this very thing, "I will put my fear in their hearts and they shall not depart from me." "My sheep shall never perish," &c. So that I believe this doctrine is true; not only from the abundant, yes, abundant testimony of scripture declarations, but because I am sure as I can be of any fact whatever, that its opposite doctrine of falling from grace *cannot be true* in the nature of things. Yet so far as any person could be persuaded in believing a system which *is not founded in truth*, I believe I so embraced the doctrine of falling from grace. And now where were *those good effects* resulting from it, in keeping me faithful, and preserving me from lukewarmness and backsliding? I am certain that I never lived so cold, and with so little religious engagedness, since I was brought to the knowledge of the truth, as I did during the time which I have just alluded to; and immediately, too, did I go into this state after imbibing the Arminian doctrine. There is no foundation for the statement at all, that the doctrine of falling from grace has a good practical effect. Those who harbour it in speculation (who are humble, faithful Christians) al-

ways renounce it before God, in their prayers, and in the principal part of their conversation in conference meetings. They resolve their whole hope of salvation *entirely* into the *promise of God*—acknowledge their entire dependance on him for every holy exercise of heart, and that if ever they are saved it must be altogether by grace, &c. &c. God's people are sanctified *through the truth*, and one thing is certain, an *untruth* never can have this tendency; to make us more holy. There is no doubt but hypocrites have seized hold of the *misrepresentations* of the doctrine of the saints perseverance to their own destruction. Being awfully deceived in supposing they were converted, when in fact there was no such thing, and understanding through misrepresentation, that the idea of final perseverance was, that they would be saved although they lived in sin and rolled it as a sweet morsel under their tongues all their days; they have deceived their own souls, and died with a lie in their right hand. In reflecting on this part of my life and experience, I can but lament that I fell into the hands of such teachers as I did. Although I have no real excuse to offer for embracing error, for I certainly had access to the bible, and should have attended more strictly to *that*, and thus formed my religious opinions on doctrinal points from God's word; yet as I have once and again remarked, it was not surprising, considering my youth, inexperience, and the unreserved confidence which I placed in old professors, and especially preachers, that I became involved and entangled in the maze and labyrinths of error and false doctrine. I say I have lamented that those whom I looked up to for religious instruction, taught me, instead of the doctrine of Christ, the opinions and traditions of men. Is this subject sufficiently weighed in the minds of religious teachers in general? Do they consider as they ought that they have almost unbounded influence over the minds of many of their hearers who are ready to receive their words as the counsel of

God, and if they do not teach them the truth, but hand out to them error and wrong ideas in respect to doctrine and practice, the consequences are likely to be extremely injurious, if not ruinous to them? How many there are who will commence with young converts, taking the advantage of their youth and inexperience, and infuse into their minds strong prejudices against the truths of the bible, by misrepresenting them to them, and then, if these same converts are ever so favoured in the mercy of God as to be delivered from the bondage of error and brought to see and embrace the whole truth, as it is in Jesus, their teachers will turn upon them frequently, like ravenous wolves, ready if possible to destroy their reputation and influence, by representing them as *unstable turn-coats!* Reader, are you a teacher in Israel? I do not mean exclusively a *public preacher;* but also a teacher in private, in conversation with your neighbours; and particularly, are you a teacher of doctrine to *young Christians?* You should be extremely *careful* that you teach *the truth.* You should be *very sure* that what you teach is the word and counsel of the Lord of Hosts. Do you take up a system of religion merely from the testimony of others, without critically, prayerfully, and faithfully examining it yourself: and through a blind zeal to favour your denomination or party, and bigotted prejudice against some other sect, propagate it? You ought to stop and think what work you are engaged in. Who *sent* you to teach for doctrine the traditions of men? Will the approbation of numbers, or to be sanctioned by a large denomination screen you from the displeasure of a holy God? I can truly say that of all the sins which I ever committed (and I have been and am still a *very great* sinner,) none has ever caused me such pain and bitterness of soul as this; of having propagated false doctrine, and violently opposed the truth. To be sure I did it ignorantly and in unbelief, and so did Paul when he persecuted the saints; nevertheless

it was a great sin, for which he could not but mourn and condemn himself. And so it was with me.— What can be said in favour of the *candour* of those preachers and professors who will *knowingly* misrepresent the doctrinal ideas of their opponents. This does appear to be a fact in respect to many. They have got the word *Calvinism* so dressed up in view of many of their hearers and readers that the very mention of the name will give them "the horrors," to use a common vulgar expression, so that they need only to declare that such a doctrine is a Calvinistic doctrine, or such a person is a Calvinist, and the dye is cast; their minds are sealed with prejudice, and without further consultation they stand ready with a verdict of condemnation. At the same time these teachers *know* that there is nothing definite to be known of a man's theological sentiments, by his being called a Calvinist, and that hundreds of thousands whom they are pleased so to style, no more believe what *they say* the system of Calvinism is, than they believe Deism, Atheism, or Universalism. Moreover, if the people whose sentiments are thus misrepresented, remonstrate, explain, and clearly state that they *do not* believe any such thing as is laid to their charge, and clearly state what they *do believe;* yet still the misrepresentation is reiterated and the prejudices excited on account of those misrepresentations, are kept up. I say what can be said in favour of the *candour* and *regard for truth* of such persons. Suppose I say a thing exists which *I know* does not exist? What name would you give to this statement of mine? And suppose I say my neighbour *believes* a thing to be true, when at the same time he asserts to the contrary, and I have no proof that he does not speak the truth; what *name* would you give *this* representation of mine? O that men would be more candid and careful, and not slander the truth and their neighbours, as many do! Methinks God has a serious controversy with such religious teachers as misrepresent truth and gratify

the pride of their hearts, in treading it under foot and in promulgating error.

The people of God are in a lamentably divided state, and it becomes all of us most solemnly to enquire whether we are engaged in spreading and vindicating the doctrines of Christ and his Apostles, or are zealous in opposing them. "Great is truth, and it will prevail," although we may oppose it with all our might, and induce thousands of others to do the same. When God shall call for an account of our stewardship, in vain do we take shelter under the wing of *our denomination,* to screen us from his displeasure, if we have spent our days in fighting against truth, and thereby sowing the seeds of discord among the flock of Christ. The *Bible* is a very plain book, so far as it respects the fundamental doctrines of Christianity; and the reason undoubtedly why we are so blind to what it inculcates is, because truth, yes, every particle of truth is extremely *disagreeable* to our proud deceitful hearts. Thousands, yea all mankind, if not prevented by the grace of God, will risk the loss of their souls forever, rather than to submit themselves to God and embrace the humiliating doctrines of grace. From hence the numerous systems of theology which are ingeniously devised and industriously propagated in the world, to save "Mr. Pharisee" from the great and terrible calamity of falling unconditionally into the hands of a sovereign God, acknowledging his doom to be just if he is cast off forever, and if he be saved that it is *altogether* of grace, without any mixture or qualification. I lament that ever I was taught heresy, but I more abundantly lament that I ever taught it to others—for this, God and his people forgive me!

CHAPTER IV.

Trials respecting speaking in public—Family worship and preaching—Imprisoned for refusing to bear arms—Severe sickness and consequent exercises of mind, &c.

I think it was in the spring of 1815, that I began to gradually awake out of sleep, and shake off that spiritual lethargy which I had so long most ungratefully and wickedly indulged in. I know not of any particular circumstance in the providence of God, which was the means of this, but believe that it was the work of the same invincible Spirit, which first created me anew in Christ Jesus; which in the beginning moved upon the face of the waters, and brought the world into existence by its omnipotent power. Not far from this time, a young man (Mr. T—m,) visited our neighbourhood, and preached; unto whom I felt a strong attachment, the first time I saw and heard him. He was a native of Salem, Mass. had lately taken up his residence in the village of Pawtuxet, about four miles from where I then resided. He was engaged in business and preached occasionally. I felt much interested in engaging him to preach in our neighbourhood, as his gift was engaging, and called the attention of the people far more than our ordinary preaching had done. I soon prevailed on him to remove to our neighbourhood, where he made my father's house his home for a number of months. Our attachment, I believe, was mutual, and has remained, so far as has come to my knowledge, constant and unbroken ever since, a period of about thirteen years. My young friend, however, was as green as myself, in respect to a proper understanding of the great truths of the bible and scriptural divinity. He had been filled with the same prejudices and used to harangue his hearers on the absurdities of what he

termed "Calvinism," to my heart's satisfaction. The attention of a number were called up to the concerns of their souls in the neighbourhood, and we conceived the idea of having a Church constituted in the place, which soon was effected; consisting at first, of only sixteen members, who were regularly dismissed from the Church in Johnson. Brother T—m was ordained pastor. I was deeply interested for our prosperity, and spared no trouble, exertion or labour in my power, to accomplish this end. I was appointed Clerk, (as I had also been in the Johnson Church) and became, strictly speaking, a burden-bearer with my brethren. Although I had at this time, a very great share of blind zeal, yet I have no doubt but that I felt in *some degree*, the influence of a spirit of piety and a zeal for the Lord of Hosts. But how unqualified were we to watch over the affairs of Christ's militant kingdom, and to take care of the Church of God. I never at that time once thought of the great danger there was of *delusion in religious experiences*, and in receiving members; this subject was never recurred to, among us. Our Church was built up, and increased in numbers, but it is to be feared that many who were added were not such "as will be saved," in the day of the Lord Jesus. As green, ignorant, and unqualified as I was, yet I was, I believe, considered as a leading member in the Church. On all *business* subjects connected with the Church concerns, I used to speak freely in Church meetings, but had not as yet opened my mouth in owning Christ before the world, praying in my family, or renewing my covenant among my brethren in meetings appointed for that purpose, preparatory to the communion season.

Brother T—m began to insist on my speaking in covenant and conference meetings; but I excused myself on account of my inability; for I verily thought it would be almost impossible for me to say a word. The subject, however, pressed with increasing weight on my mind, and I began to be much distressed on account of neglecting this duty. I framed excuses from

time to time, until one evening, attending a conference meeting, after a number had spoken, a poor African in a most broken manner, spake on the subject of religion, when I thought surely there was no excuse left for me, and I must either open my mouth, or suffer some dreadful consequences. I accordingly arose and talked a few minutes, but was so agitated with the fear of man, that I knew not after I had taken my seat what I had been saying. From that time to this, however, I have continued to speak in religious meetings where there has been opportunity without cessation, although I was so agitated for some time after this, that in speaking a very few minutes, I should be as much out of breath and exhausted as if I had been running a mile. Another cross now lay before me, which appeared to me still heavier, and I knew not that I should ever find strength to take it up. This was to pray in my family. I had hitherto entirely neglected it, and knew, moreover, that in all other respects I had not lived before my family agreeably with the great profession I had made. From hence the query: what confidence will *they* put in you *now*, if you undertake this? It was a most grievous trial to me, and I knew not how to surmount it. I procrastinated and made vows, that at such a time in future I would attend to it; but when the time arrived I felt more hedged up than ever—I would beg to be excused for that time, and renew my vows to do my duty at a more convenient season; but still kept breaking them. I would frequently leave the house and wander into the fields, and *there* try to pray. But this would not answer; for I could enjoy no freedom at all. After suffering much in mind and breaking many solemn vows which I had made to God, I made my "way through the crowd," and attended to this important duty, which to my shame and reproach I had long neglected. Are there not many who are trying to get around this cross? What progress do you make, reader? Will not your family, or some of them at least, in the day of judgment rise up and curse you? In about one year after I commenc-

ed *exhorting* and speaking in conference meetings, I began to entertain serious thoughts of preaching. Although as yet, I was extremely ignorant on many important points of doctrine, yet I was now quite studious in the devotion of what time I could spare from my daily avocations to the acquirement of religious knowledge. My mind was principally taken up in trying to prove and to convince my unconverted friends and neighbours, of the Divine authenticity of the scriptures, the truth of revelation, and the reality of experimental religion. In this course I was considerably successful, and frequently enjoyed much liberty in speaking. My gift, however, soon became quite a snare to me; for I was conscious that I sometimes spake fluently and to the point, and this being often repeated to me by the Devil, and sometimes too very imprudently by God's people, I had much ado to keep from being wrecked on the quicksands of spiritual pride, and from being driven away from the simplicity of the gospel, by the winds of vanity and self-conceit, which then blew like a whirlwind all around me.

My trials in respect to preaching were not so extraordinary *at first* as many of whom I have heard, but they have *increased* ever since. I was, however, much exercised on the subject with sober reflections on the importance of the work, and my own insufficiency for such a great undertaking. I remember of having some singular exercises about this time. It seemed to me that God was so *great*, and such an infinitely glorious being, and I was so *small*, and of so *little* consequence in the scale of being, that he would never notice me enough to bless me in this world so as to make me an instrument of doing any good, nor finally bring me to heaven. These thoughts for a while were to me exceedingly distressing, and I felt considerably humbled under a sense of my own unworthiness and nothingness. Brother T—m observing me gloomy and dejected, readily told me that he thought me called to preach the gospel, and insisted on my making the trial. He offered me ev-

ery assistance in his power, and with other acts of kindness and brotherly affection, took me into his carriage, to visit a neighbouring minister, a few miles to the west of where we resided, to converse on the subject, and encourage me in the work. They prevailed on me to make an appointmet to preach in the Six Principle Baptist Meeting House in Scituate, on I believe the third Sabbath in October 1818. During the intermediate time I rested not very easy, and my carpenter's tools were no small burden to me, on account of the thoughts that occupied my mind in respect to the great work in which I was about to engage. I had put my hand to the plough, and it would not do for me to look back. One reason, I expect, why I did not longer shrink from attempting to preach the gospel, was on account of the *system of doctrines*, which I then advocated. I had got through in some degree, with the great embarrassment of *speaking* before a congregation; and as for Arminianism, mankind *naturally* love the doctrine, so that there is but little or no cross in preaching it to the world. I now see clearly that the great cross in preaching the gospel consists chiefly in preaching the doctrine of salvation *entirely by grace*, and more especially perhaps the doctrine of God's sovereign right, to save or damn guilty sinners as he in infinite mercy shall see fit. Besides this, I was determined to be independant of any assistance *temporally*, and intended to support myself and family, and preach besides—so the reader will see that I carried a large quantity of food with me into the sanctuary, to keep "Mr. Pharisee"a live, which reduced the struggle down to a moderate state, compared with what it would otherwise have been, if I had understood and felt constrained to have declared the whole counsel of God, and to have given myself up as entirely *dependant* in this calling for *temporal* as well as *spiritual* support.

The day at length arrived, and I met the people and preached from Gen. iii. 9. "And the Lord God called unto Adam and said unto him, where art thou?"

I spake without much embarrassment, and to the apparent satisfaction of my brethren, who bid me God speed, and heartily exhorted me to persevere in what I had undertaken. From that time, I went on, endeavouring to preach when duty called, and the way opened, preaching some in my own neighbourhood, and usually visiting the adjacent towns and villages; as I had many invitations. I felt more and more the responsibility of my station, and cried earnestly to God for grace to be faithful. I have already mentioned, that before my conversion, and during the relapse into sin and lukewarmness, already alluded to, I was much taken up with political and military subjects; so much so that I voluntarily joined a chartered Military Company, before the law compelled me to bear arms—but when I began to wake up out of sleep, these subjects began to lose their charms, and gradually became burdensome and disagreeable. In respect to bearing arms, I was more and more exercised, until I came to the conclusion to renounce it altogether and risk the consequences. I had began to speak as a Messenger from the *Prince of Peace*, and was endeavouring to inculcate the principles of peace on earth and good will to men—of loving our enemies—of not resisting evil; and for me, after declaring these things one day, to go *the next*, and take instruments of war and death, and learn how to kill! perhaps some of God's dear children, too, looked to me as inconsistent and contradictory. I meditated on the subject with much interest and concern—endeavoured to candidly weigh the arguments in favour of the practice, but after all could not see that it was any way consistent with the spirit and letter of the gospel dispensation to kill innocent and pious men to gratify the ambition or revenge of kings and rulers. I now stood fair for a commission in the company, and should very probably have obtained one if I had continued a few months longer. But I felt as if I must stop, let the consequences be what they would, and accordingly wrote to the officers of the company, and stated my deter-

mination. I endeavoured to count the cost, and considered it probable that I should suffer in consequence of my resolution not to bear arms. I was not disappointed; for in due time, I was required to pay my fine or go to prison. As I considered paying my fine the *same thing* as continuing in the practice, I told them that I could not acquiesce, notwithstanding many of my friends persuaded me to do it, and one man stood ready with money to pay for me, if I had not any of my own ready at hand. But this was not the difficulty; but the principle involved I could not accede to. I was disgusted at that time with one young man, who had said more on the subject of bearing arms than most any other person of my acquaintance—declaring it to be unscriptural, wicked, &c. but who now advised me to pay my fine, or thought I had much better do it than to suffer by going to prison, as I did not know when I should be extricated. I thought it best to try to be honest, and trust God for deliverance. It was indeed a trial; for I was called upon just at the close of the day, and at a time too when the health of my family seemed to require constant attention. I have thought that this time was selected with the expectation that I should recant and give up my principles for the sake of *convenience*, or to avoid the very disagreeable results from the stand which I had taken. But I was enabled to stand in the evil day against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places; and at the same time submitted to the "*powers that be*," without resistance. I was attended by the officer to the prison in Providence—it was quite dark before we arrived there, and one may well imagine, that thus to be thrust into close confinement, when I had always calculated to live "*above board*," pay my debts *punctually*, and live *independently*, required some support from objects more than worldly to keep me in a tolerable comfortable state of mind. I was locked up in the upper room in the debtor's apartment; a most disagreeable and loathsome situation to be sure; yet notwithstanding I tried

to content myself and trust in God. The Lord however gave me "*favour in sight of the keeper of the prison,*" and I had not been in the room where I was first confined but a short time—perhaps not an hour, before I was permitted to enjoy the liberty of the whole house. I remained in prison two days, when the doors were opened, and I was set at liberty ; but why and wherefore I have never learned. Let every one judge for himself, in respect to this subject of bearing arms ; as for me, I cannot endure the thought of being instrumental in precipitating my fellow men into eternity, who have been driven into the field of battle by ambitious and avaricious kings or rulers.

After I had been preaching about nine months, I was one Sabbath returning home from an appointment, which I had been filling in the neighbourhood of the Lippitt Factory, in Warwick, when I became absorbed in serious reflections on the important station which I had assumed. I thought I had seen the dreadful consequences of young ministers being flattered ; that they had been lifted up with pride, and fallen into "the condemnation of the devil." I stopped in the road and cried mightily to God, to preserve *me* from such a dreadful fall. I remember perfectly well one expression which I made, and repeated.—Lord, (said I,) Solomon asked for wisdom, but first of all, I beseech thee to give me humility. I was conscious that I needed wisdom also, but I was so fearful of being puffed up in consequence of the undivided approbation which I received from my brethren, and the attention which was paid to my preaching by the world, that for a season I scarcely knew how to contain myself. But I little expected that God would answer my prayer, and humble me in the way which I have reason to believe he did. At this time I laboured at my trade during the week, and used to carry my small New Testament, which had marginal notes, in my pocket, and studied it attentively almost every leisure moment. I preached frequently, evenings ; but when I was not thus

engaged, I was generally alone, by myself, absorbed in meditation and prayer. I had, about this time, thoughts of emigrating to the western country, and felt determined to exert myself to obtain property, that I might preach independently of receiving a temporal support, and so blow the gospel trumpet in those destitute regions, of which I heard much from my brother T——m, who had, by an appointment of the yearly meeting, just visited them.—While I was one day meditating on this subject, and at the same time driving on with my work, in a great hurry, I struck a fatal blow to all my calculations, and in a moment demolished all the castles which I had been building in the air. I plunged accidentally a small gouge in the palm of my hand; and although the instrument was small, yet at the moment I received the wound, I felt a kind of foreboding that the consequences would be serious, if not fatal. The pain ran up my arm into my shoulder and neck, and I was advised to use precautions against the lock-jaw. I visited an old lady in the neighbourhood, who had once been attacked with that dreadful complaint, in consequence of a wound in the end of one of her fingers, by a small cambric needle: (how frail we are!) She gave me advice how to treat the wound, and I followed it accordingly; but was unable to labour, in consequence of the soreness of my hand; so I devoted the time to visiting, and occasionally preaching. It was about this time, I think, that I visited Pawtucket, for the first time, in order to enquire into the state of business, and if I might find a good job of work, after my hand was restored, so that I might attend to it, which now appeared to be doing well, and had almost healed over on the outside.

But just as I began to promise myself peace and safety, sudden destruction stared me in the face.—On the morning of the fourth day of July, about nine days after I received the wound, and when to all appearance it was almost well, it began to pro-

duce evident symptoms of the lock-jaw. I afterwards learned that this was the way which this terrible disorder often visited those who had fallen its victims. The physicians told me it was occasioned by a nerve's being wounded, or partly cut off internally, which remained in that disordered state, after the wound appeared to be *externally* well.—Death now stared me in the face, and I repaired immediately to Providence, in order to put myself under the care of the most skilful surgeon I could find. Being unable to find Dr. Mackie, Dr. Fuller, his partner, examined my hand, and after learning the symptoms, told me there was danger of the complaint apprehended by myself and friends. The plan of treatment which he pursued, was to endeavour to again throw open the wound, cause it to materate, and separate some of the nerves in the palm of my hand. In order to effect this, he applied caustic to burn it, which was almost as excruciatingly painful as a live coal of fire lying continually on the wound. I was apprehensive that there was but a small chance for me to survive the attack, and felt solemn beyond description. I never can describe how the bustle and parade occasioned by the citizens engaged in the celebration of the birth of our national independence, looked to me at this time. Surely the course pursued by our citizens generally (and I am sorry to say by professors of religion, too) must be displeasing to him who rules our destinies, and who can pull us down at his pleasure, notwithstanding all our boasted strength and present independence and prosperity. The pomp and pride of the world now appeared to me to be but pride and vanity indeed. From that time to this I have never engaged in fourth of July celebrations, although frequently solicited, for I know it would be a situation I should not wish to *die* in—and should we go to any place, or be engaged in any undertaking from which we should not be willing to step off into eternity?

I returned home after my hand had been examined

and directions given me from the surgeon. I was in agonizing pain, and the next day visited the surgeon again in Providence, where I concluded to stay at the house of my sister some days, if I should live, that the more strict attention might be paid, to arrest the threatening calamity. The next day I walked down street, to have my hand dressed; but it was with great difficulty that I returned, on account of the dreadful pain with which I was exercised. I now sunk under the weight of my disorder, and took to my bed with the prospect of more terrible scenes near at hand. I was visited in the evening by Dr. Mackie, who manifested uncommon solicitude for the preservation of my life, but who began to give evident tokens of doubt and discouragement respecting the final issue. My fond mother, who had been long in the habit of being much with the sick, exerted herself to the utmost for my relief, and watched over me with paternal kindness. On the day following, I was seized instantaneously with a spasmodic affection, which was like the hand of death, and threatened me with immediate dissolution. It affected my whole system, causing universal distress, and I concluded myself actually passing through the dark solemn entry of death into the eternal world. Indeed I was told afterwards by the physicians, that it was impossible for a person to experience more death-like sensations than those spasms produced; nor do I expect to feel more like dying than I then did. I know not that I had the most distant thought of surviving. Dr. Mackie was immediately called, and through the mercy of God I soon obtained a partial temporary relief. The Doctor now conceived it to be necessary to use more powerful means, in order, if possible to baffle the disorder, and preserve life. I took opium most freely, mercury and a preparation of arsenic (vulgarly called ratsbane) until I was almost blind, in order to prevent the spasms. But they followed me up incessantly, notwithstanding, for a number of days, during which time I lay as I conceived, in the very arms of death, ex-

pecting *every moment* to be in eternity. I felt inexpressibly solemn, although I had a strong hope, which was like an anchor to my soul, of eternal blessedness.

How vain for me to undertake fully to describe my feelings at this time. I was perfectly rational. I warned every person who came near me to prepare for death. I gave the parting hand to my wife, parents, brothers and sisters, and bid them as I thought farewell forever for this world. I was parched with a burning fever; was thirsty beyond expression, and would have given worlds if I had possessed them, to have been permitted to drink a cup of cold water, which was strictly prohibited. I thought of that river spoken of in the book of Revelations, as clear as chrystal, which I hoped soon to drink my fill, and bathe my soul in seas of heavenly rest ! !

These words of the poet were almost continually in my mind, "Child your father calls, come home."—In this situation I lay for about three or four days, perfectly possessed of my reason, looking off into a boundless eternity, expecting every moment to be there, and to close my eyes forever on earthly and sublunary things. No person can imagine how the world, with its fashions, pride and splendor, looked to me, except they have been in a similar situation. My brother T—m visited me, and although so overcome that he could scarcely speak, yet he prayed fervently with me, and begged for my life with strong importunity at the Throne of Grace. I gave directions respecting my funeral, and gave brother T—m the 4th chapter, 12th verse of Acts, for a text from which to preach my funeral sermon. But after Isaac was offered up as dead in his father's view, God preserved his life, and he was restored as one raised from the grave. So with me. The spasms began to be less severe and threatening and the Dr. began to speak some encouraging words that yet there might be hope. I hope I shall never be so lost to all feelings of gratitude towards those who have been instrumental in doing me good, as to forget Drs. Mackie and Fuller,

whose constant, unwearied, and unremitting attention to me in these hours of peril, were undoubtedly, through the blessing of God, (without which nothing would have saved me) the means of saving my life. Although Dr. Mackie attended me principally, yet I remember them both with affection and grateful regard. I think it was the fourth night after the first attack, that I obtained some sleep. I felt thankful to God, and as often as I awoke the words of the Psalmist were in my mind—I know not but I repeated them a hundred times during the night—"Bless the Lord O my soul for he is good—for his mercy endureth forever." I never felt such a spirit of thanksgiving and praise for temporal mercies. The least thing done for me by my friends, would melt my heart with grateful feelings. The next day passed away without a return of the spasms, my hand began to maturate and the symptoms were generally favourable. My appetite began to return, and was exceedingly craving, but it was necessary to be careful of my diet. My mother gave me a little green pea broth, which was to me incomparably more delicious than any natural food of which I had ever before partook. I truly felt to thank God for every morsel I ate or drank—his great and good name seemed imprinted on all things which surrounded me, but sin. As I cast a look out of the window, and beheld the fields of corn, the meadows of grass, and gardens filled with vegetables, all which I never expected to see again; I thought every spire of grass praised my maker's name. I gradually grew better, but my hand was exceedingly sore, the Dr. having burned and cut a place directly around the first wound something larger than a cent in diameter, to produce a sore, and if possible to separate the nerve which occasioned the difficulty. The dead flesh now began to give way, which was almost as hard as a piece of sole leather, and when removed left the wound open very deep, with numerous ends of little nerves all round, which had been separated by the Surgeon, which were inconceivably tender; indeed I could not have

had an idea without experience of the extreme susceptibility of feeling in these little fibres. They were as tender as the apple of the eye, and in the palm of the hand very numerous, and the touch of the end of one of them, although the most carefully done, was more than I could endure without crying aloud: notwithstanding previous determinations that I would bear it without making any ado. I saw that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made," and thought with the poet that "it's strange a harp with a thousand strings should keep in tune so long," and did not wonder that the wound occasioned by a cambric needle, should sometimes wreck the mortal tabernacle of frail man. In about two weeks I was able to ride home. I felt more anxious to preach now than ever I had done, and grew almost impatient for the time to come, when I should have strength of body to stand on my feet long enough to preach a sermon. In a few days I made an appointment in the meeting-house in Johnson, and although I felt my weakness of body in some degree before I commenced preaching; yet I knew nothing of it comparatively speaking, until I had been standing a few minutes, when I found that I had undertaken that which I had by no means strength to perform. The fact was, my whole nervous system was debilitated, and as it were, unstrung by the violence of the attack, and the effect of the powerful medicine given me to counteract it and save my life; so that it needed time, and a *long time* too, for me to regain my strength, and for my nerves again to be braced up—indeed when a person's nerves are once so affected as mine were, I believe they but seldom recover so as not to be much troubled with weakness in this respect. I feel the effects of the blow which then so affected my system until this day, especially, when fatigued, or overdone; and for many years after my sickness, the spasms followed me with frequent and powerful attacks. I saw myself, and was also told by the Doctor, that I must give up the thought of preaching until I gained more strength, and so I en-

deavored to reconcile myself to my situation, praying to God for grace to support me in this time of trial. It was probable that a number of months would elapse before I should be able to attend to any business for the support of my family—and then I was with a wife and four small children, being about even with the world, when I was taken sick, and no prospect of ever being able to work again at my trade, on account of the feeble state of my hand, besides one of my finger's being so drawn down that it would be almost impossible for me to handle tools, if otherwise I should have strength to labour. But however distrustful I had been when well, of the goodness of God, and his providential care over me, I now seemed entirely relieved from all distressing anxiety on account of my temporal situation. I gave all up into the hands of Him who feeds the ravens and clothes the lillies of the field. I was astonished to see how many friends God raised me up to supply my wants, and those of my family. How true have I found these words of Jesus—"seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Reflections.

In reflecting on the dealings of God with me, as I have given a limited account in the foregoing Chapter, I find many things worthy of note, and to be had in everlasting remembrance. And first—an answer to prayer. The reader will remember that I was earnest in my prayer to God for more humility, that I might shun the rocks on which I considered many young preachers foundered, viz: spiritual pride and self-exaltation. One day, while sitting in the house, and reflecting on my feeble state, together with the solemn scenes which God had lately brought me through, I took up the hymn book, and opened it to one of Mr. Newton's hymns, which I read with a great interest, as peculiarly applicable to my own

case. It was entitled "Prayer answered by crosses," and read as follows:

"I ask'd the Lord that I might grow
In faith and love and every grace,
Might more of his salvation know,
And seek more earnestly his face.

'Twas he who taught me thus to pray,
And he I trust has answered prayer,
But it has been in *such a way*,
As almost drove me to despair.

I hoped that in some favoured hour,
At once he'd answer my request,
And by his love's constraining power,
Subdue my sins and give me rest.

Instead of this he made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart,
And let the angry powers of hell,
Assault my soul in every part.

Yea more—with his own hand he seem'd
Intent to aggravate my woe,
Cross all the fair designs I schemed,
Blasted my gourds and laid me low.

Lord, why is this, I trembling cried,
Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death?
"This is the way, the Lord replied,
I answer prayer for grace and faith.

These inward trials I employ,
From self and pride to set thee free,
And break thy schemes of earthly joy;
That thou may'st seek thy all in me."

I had no sooner read this hymn, than my mind was carried back to the places and seasons of solemn prayer to God as I have mentioned above, and it looked to me plain that God had answered me in this unexpected way. I expected that humility would drop directly down from heaven, into my heart, without any afflictive dispensations of Providence, but God saw fit to deal with me quite differently. He kept me for a number of days, as it were, lying on the very brink of

the precipice, expecting every moment to launch away into the invisible world. While in this situation, I had a fair opportunity to look at the world with all its honours, in about their true colours, and to see how little service the approbation and praise of mortals was to a dying man—it made a lasting impression on my mind. I had also a most impressive view of the frailty of man and the uncertainty of human life and a sensible and deep impression was made on my mind that we ought to live like *minute* men for eternity, and to be always ready for the coming of the Lord. In short, it seemed as if the Lord in a manner tore me in pieces and held me up to my own view as before a mirror, that I might see how frail I was, and how completely dependant on him. I did not indeed have so clear a discovery of the native depravity and deceitfulness of my own heart,as I did at a subsequent period, yet I began to have very humiliating views of myself in this respect, which at that time brought me low before God. But I consider that my *doctrinal ideas* were a great hindrance to my making very swift progress in the study of this lesson.

2d. I can but notice the dealings of God in "crossing all the fair designs I had schemed, blasting my gourds and laying me low." I was determined to pursue my business and thus not only maintain myself and family, but also *treasure up* something "*against a rainy day;*" and at the same moment I received the wound in my hand was making calculations in my mind accordingly. But God designed another course for me and was not lacking for means to *cause me* to pursue it. I was obliged to desist. My hand was so injured that the idea of working at my trade was now altogeth er out of the question. Reader, if God has called you to preach the gospel, beware how you resist or *choose your own ways* in obeying the call. "*In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy steps.*" If nothing else will do, *judgments* must come. O go before some *dreadful thing* come upon thee. Undoubtedly the pride of my heart had much influence with me

when I was so unwilling to give up my business, and throw myself into the hands of God, as a poor dependant creature for temporal as well as spiritual mercies. I naturally hated *dependance*, and could not bear the thought of receiving a *farthing* as a *free gift*. Besides; all ministers who did not maintain themselves, were considered in our country as hireling preachers. This reproach was hard for me to endure; not considering that it is *really a reproach* to a man who is called of God to leave all and devote himself unreservedly to the work of the ministry, to be so far *entangled with the things of this world*, as many are who work six days out of seven on their farms, at their trade, &c. But the Lord was determined that I should submit to *his way*, and although the rod was grievous for the time being, yet I trust I shall forever praise him in eternity for using it. "God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform," but he sees the end from the beginning, and leads his people forth, "*in the right way that they may go to a city of habitation.*"

3d. This dispensation almost (and I think I may say with propriety quite) cured me of all anxiety to become rich, or to be possessed of much of the riches of this world, and from that time to this, I have enjoyed that confidence in God for the supply of all my temporal wants which before I was in a great degree a stranger to. My friends have frequently offered to assist me in obtaining a house that I could call my own, and have repeatedly urged me to give my consent to a subscription's being circulated for that purpose, but I never felt liberty in my mind to acquiesce with their generous proposals, although I had every reason to believe that such an undertaking would succeed. I have not a word to say against other Christians possessing a house or lands, but for *my own part* I think such a course would not be expedient. Our blessed master had no where to lay his head; and Paul declares that he had no certain dwelling-place, and we should be willing rather to suffer with them, than that the ministry should be blamed. Besides, it

is best perhaps for Ministers to live in a continual state of dependance on God for temporal as well as spiritual mercies—they have thereby the opportunity of *proving* God every day, and of exercising faith in his promises. God threw me down on a sick bed, when I had no "goods in store," and when a wife and four children were dependant on me for their daily bread; but at the same time that he thus laid his hand upon me, he gave me sweet consolation by enabling me to trust in his promises and word; and although I was about nine months in this situation, yet I do not remember of ever having a single distressing thought on the subject, nor did I ever want for any good thing. And this confidence in God has generally been afforded me since; and although after my recovery, I taught a school for a few months, as I conceived it my duty, yet when I felt it my duty to give up all temporal business and devote my whole time to preaching the gospel, and the work of the ministry, although I had no stated salary, yet I was enabled to cast myself into the hands of him whom I believed had called me to the work. And I will speak it to his glory forever—he has always taken care of me and my family, and supplied all our wants. I bless his name, and trust I shall ever continue to do so in time, and in the heavenly world above, for this scene of afflictions which he brought me through. While the Lord kept me on the verge of time, looking first into the eternal world which lay before me, and then at this world which I conceived I was just about leaving forever, I had such a view of the emptiness and vanity, and I may add, sinfulness of much which is called worship among the professed people of God, as I trust I shall never forget. O how much is there in the professional world that is highly esteemed among them, that is an abomination in the sight of Him who requires truth in the inward part. The pompous show of elegant meeting houses, polished preachers, (I mean not those who are like polished shafts—I wish there were more of *such*,) or in other words, a fashionable religion, looked to me at

that time, lighter than vanity when compared with the simplicity of the gospel which the world hate and despise. O may I never forget the views which I then had, and may they ever have a salutary influence through the sanctifying influences of the grace of God, in preserving me from those things which I then saw to be altogether insufficient to satisfy the soul in view of an awful and long eternity. Finally, my sickness and afflictions seemed to be really sanctified to me, and I humbly trust were the means in the hand of the Holy Spirit, in weaning me more from the world than I had been, and fitting me for farther usefulness in the blessed cause which I had espoused.

CHAPTER V.

Extreme nervous weakness—Commenced preaching again—Commenced preaching in Providence—The Church in Cranston dissent from the Six Principle Baptists on account of the ordinance of laying on of hands—View of that subject, &c.

I now found myself afflicted with a universal weakness of the nervous system, a complaint which I will not undertake to describe; as it would be useless to those who know what it is by experience, and as for thosewho do not thus understand it, they can never be convinced merely by the testimony of others. O how much unfeeling cruelty there is exercised towards nervous persons, by those who are ignorant of the nature of the disease; a disease, too, which is as much beyond the power of those to remedy who are its tortured subjects, as is a consumption of the lungs, or a contagious fever; and yet all the consolation which such afflicted souls get from the majority of mankind, is to be laughed in the face, and sneeringly to be called spleeny, &c. I have thought that God suffered me to be afflicted with this dreadful complaint, that I might

know how to pity, deal with, and have compassion on others, who were in the same situation. I suffered more than I can possibly describe, while confined for about nine months, almost as weak as a little child. The nervous complaint makes a grand fortress for the devil, and gives him a great advantage over those who are thus afflicted. One effect which it has always had on me, when overcome with it, is, that it produces a kind of uneasiness and restlessness, that is extremely disagreeable, if not gratified. I have spent hours almost innumerable, in walking the fields and groves, in the dark watches of the night, when any thing more than ordinary occurred to give me trouble. I knew this was not best for me, and could reason on the subject as well as ever; but still it would seem as if I could not govern myself. O how many times have I left my bed and pursued these solitary walks, and passed the time away in agony alone! But I will not undertake, as I before observed, to describe the effects of a nervous debilitation on him who is thus affected. I will only say, that although it does not bereave him of his reasoning powers, (for he can reason as conclusively as ever) yet it seems, if I may so speak, to unman him; it reduces him in some sense, to the state of a little child, and such a person ought to be dealt with accordingly. During the time of my confinement, I read as much as the state of my health would permit, reviewed my former studies of English grammar, mathematicks, &c. as I contemplated keeping school as soon as I should be able. God raised me up many kind friends, who were attentive to me in my afflictions, and all my temporal wants were supplied. In the spring of the year I moved my family into my father's house, and commenced teaching a small school, and also began again to preach a little. But I was extremely weak in body, and harrassed much in my mind, through the suggestions and temptations of the Devil. I determined, however, to endeavour to do my duty, if it should be made known to me, let what would be the consequences.

About this time, some of the brethren in Providence, who were members of the church in Cranston, provided a room in the north part of that town, for the purpose of holding meetings, and it was proposed that brother T. and myself should alternately attend them. I accordingly commenced, but it was through much infirmity. My first visit, I remember, was attended with circumstances not much calculated to gain the applause, or approbation of the great. Having obtained the loan of a miserable looking old horse, I mounted, with apparel myself which tolerably well coincided in appearance with the almost worn out beast, who bore my weak and trembling frame. I proceeded with a slow pace to the place appointed, being saluted by sundry boys, as I passed along the streets, "that my horse had lost his tail!" The days had been, when I could not have endured this; but the scene which I had so lately passed thro' prepared me to suffer this shame and reproach without anger or repining. I knew that God looked at the heart, and that the time was not far distant, when all the splendour of this world would fade and pass away, and nothing but pure and undefiled religion stand before the great white throne!

I was about this time greatly distressed on account of the erroneous sentiments and practices of many professional Christians. The Farnum delusion, which I have before alluded to, prevailed to an alarming degree, not far from me. I was almost in an agony, considerable part of my time, for fear that I should either settle down into a dull formality, on the one hand, or in endeavouring to avoid that, run into an extreme of religious fanaticism and blind delusion.—This brought me before God often, beseeching him that I might be "*led forth in the right way, that I might go to a city of habitation.*" I well remember the places in the groves and swamps in Cranston, and after I removed from that town into Johnson, where I used often to resort and cry most earnestly to God to lead my mind into truth, and preserve me from dangerous errors. I think those prayers

have since been answered, (as I shall shew in the sequel,) but in a way the most distant from my expectations at that time. I believe these desires were begotten in my breast by the Holy Spirit.—"Howbeit, (says Christ) when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth."

At this time I had not the most distant idea but what my Arminian sentiments were true, nor did I think of examining them. I however began to doubt the propriety of some of the notions of the Six Principle Baptists, in respect to ordinances. The idea respecting the laying on of hands on private members of the Church, I endeavoured to examine candidly by the word of God, and was satisfied in the issue that it was unscriptural. I will here transcribe a part of a letter which I wrote in answer to an anonymous one which I received on this subject some time after the Church to which I belonged, as well as myself, resolved no longer to acquiesce with the restrictions of the Six Principle Baptists, (that the laying on of hands should be a bar to the communion) which will give the reader a comprehensive view of the subject.

"You next come to the point in question; or rather, you undertake to prove, that the laying on of hands is required by the commands of Christ or his apostles, as it respects individual membership in the militant church of God, &c.

"This, Sir, was the very point which in the first place occasioned the controversy; and now, is it not surprising, that after all that has been said upon this subject by the Six Principle Baptist brethren; that notwithstanding they contend that no church, without conforming to this point, can be in gospel order, and of course, that there is not a denomination of Christians under heaven that is upon the gospel plan completely but themselves, and that because we have presumed to give fellowship to other denominations of Christians, who have not been in the practice of this ordinance, we must, by you, be considered as disorderly members, and be expos-

ed to censure as such; that even upon this very ground the Six Principle Baptist preachers have taken the liberty to assemble in council in Cranston, without our consent, to consider the concerns of the Cranston Church; and *after* they have so assembled, to advise that about twelve members of said church, who had, as they termed it, continued steadfast in the principles of the doctrine of Christ, should be considered the standing church in Cranston, and thus to throw the great majority, consisting of about five sixths of the church, into their hands, to be disposed of as they should think proper; and that in pursuance with the aforesaid proceedings, the said twelve members (out of which number there were only four males) should presume in due form to excommunicate the whole of us, and to set us aside from the communion, until we should confess and forsake the errors of our ways and return to them, as they term it, in the faith and order of the gospel: I say, is it not surprising, that after all this and much more has been done and said on the part of our opponents, that they should not be able to produce one single passage from the Bible to support them in their proceedings?

As to our being set aside from the close* communion, or from the manner in which you hold, I do certainly, Sir, highly congratulate you and the rest of my brethren upon this auspicious event; and, Sir, it is my earnest desire, and I presume I shall have an hearty amen from the rest of my brethren who have had the good fortune to be sharers with me in this affair, that we may never be set into it again. But, as I said before, so say I again, that it is a matter of surprise, that you should pretend to say and do all these things, and after all that you can do or say, as to the point in question,

* What is here understood by the close communion, is, rejecting those who had not been under hands.

you can prove just nothing at all. I was sensible, Sir, of this before; I have travelled the road myself: I think that I have examined the subject thoroughly; I gladly would have caught at one straw of positive proof to have supported me in your ideas, before I would have been induced to renounce them. But, Sir, after I became thoroughly convinced that they could not be supported by plain scripture testimony, I candidly relinquished them, and from hence, I did not hesitate to say what I did say in my letter, that I invoked the genius of the whole of my Six Principle Baptist brethren to prove the position from the word of God. I have no doubt, Sir, but they have done their best to endeavour to do it. I presume that they consider *you* to be the *most competent* person who could be found, that would undertake to contend for the point; and, I presume that you said all that you conceived that you had to say in order to maintain the position. But, Sir, what does it all amount to? You ask if such were not the practices at the opening of the gospel day, &c. You make a great talk about idolatry, superstition, bigotry, common sense, reason, and scripture, and the such like; but, as to proving that which you have undertaken, you have fallen altogether short. You have not adduced, as I before observed, one single passage of scripture to shew me that the laying on of hands on private members, as a prerequisite to their becoming visible members of Christ's militant kingdom, is a command of the gospel.

I have never disputed that the writer to the Hebrews in the 6th chapter and 2d verse, mentions the laying on of hands; neither have I disputed that Peter and John laid hands on the disciples at Samaria, or that Paul laid hands on the twelve men; nor have I disputed the privilege of laying on of hands on private members of the church in this age. But observe, the idea which we have in this performance is the point which we differ upon. Your idea is, that a person is not a legal member of the visible church of Christ, un-

til they have been under hands. You contend that this is the import of the passage above referred to in Hebrews; of course you make the conclusion, that no church or individual is in gospel order without conforming to it, and from hence you reject them from the Lord's Table, &c. Now, that you have nothing decisive to prove yourself correct, I presume has already appeared, and I do therefore contend, that, as far as you should go upon this subject, should be to say that *that* is your opinion respecting the point; but, you should remember, that other Christians have as good right to their opinions upon this passage as you have yourself, and not because they may differ from you in the ideas which may be drawn from a passage of scripture of the like nature with the above, to conclude that you have a gospel right to predominate your opinion over that of your brethren. Circumstantial evidence is all that you can produce to maintain your ideas, and I think if we were to gather the whole of this which is to be found in the acts of the apostles,and to weigh it in the balances, that even upon this ground you would be found wanting.

Now the question arises, that whether the apostles, when they laid hands on the disciples at Samaria, or Paul, when he laid hands on the twelve men at Ephesus, performed the thing with the views for which you contend, or whether they performed it as the means to obtain the gift of the Holy Ghost. That they did not perform it with the views and upon the principles for which you contend, appears rather evident from various circumstances. And, in the first place, when Peter preached at the day of Pentecost, and a multitude were pricked at the heart, and cried out, men and brethren, what shall we do, &c. it appears that Peter told them plainly what to do; "to repent and be baptised, every one of them, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost;" Acts 2, 38. He tells them nothing about the laying on of hands, to our knowledge, neither is there any thing mentioned relative to

the circumstance, that would lead us to imagine that it was attended to. In like manner, was the circumstance of the jailor's crying out unto Paul, in language of the same import, and Paul tells him he must believe; and then the circumstance of his being baptized seems to be carefully mentioned, but nothing said about the laying on of hands. So, also, in the case of Lydia and her household, the circumstance of her being baptized is mentioned, but not a word about laying on of hands; so, likewise, it was the case respecting Cornelius and his household. In all of these circumstances, the ordinance of baptism is expressly mentioned; and, Sir, if it were really the case, that the laying on of hands is, as you contend, an ordinance of the gospel with baptism, and as essential to be attended to for visibility; I say, if this really were the case, might we not expect that there would have some things been mentioned in all of these circumstances relative to it? It cannot be found that the apostles ever laid hands on private members of the church, who had already received the gift of the Holy Ghost. While Peter was speaking to Cornelius, the Holy Ghost fell on them, and of course there was no necessity that the apostle should use this means to obtain the blessing which they had already received: but he cries out, "can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost, as well as we?" And he commanded them to be baptized, &c. Now, I ask you, Sir, if it appears, when we look impartially at this circumstance, as if the apostle laid hands on Cornelius and his household, or whether Philip laid hands on the Eunuch? Certainly it does not look so to me; but you may say I do not know that they did not; neither, Sir, do you know, that in the 6th of Hebrews, the apostle meant to communicate the ideas for which you contend. But, as you resort to circumstances and appearances, all that I ask for is, to let them have their proper weight, that all Christians may weigh them in their mind, and judge for themselves.

"On the other hand, that the apostles practised the

laying on of hands, in the two cases above mentioned, not with the views, nor upon the principles for which you contend, but as the means that the Holy Ghost might be given, or that a special blessing might be obtained, appears rather evident from various circumstances. And, in the first place, it appears that they laid on hands upon various occasions. Observe Acts, 28th, 8th and 9th: And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever, and of a bloody flux, to whom Paul entered in and prayed, and *laid* his *hands* on him, and healed him, &c. Again observe, that Ananias put his hands on Saul, before the scales fell from his eyes, Acts, 9, 17. Our Saviour laid his hands on little children: observe Matthew, 19, 13, 14 and 15: "Then there was brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them; but Jesus said, suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven; and he *laid* his *hands* on them, and departed thence." All that our Saviour says about laying on of hands, that I have observed, is recorded in Mark, 16, 18: "They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall *lay* their *hands* on the *sick*, and they shall recover." These are the signs which our Saviour says shall follow them who believe in the gospel. Now, suppose, Sir, that I were to take it into my head to tell you that the laying on of hands on the sick must be strictly attended to, and if you are a preacher, that you must, without fail, ever lay hands on the sick of the church, and pray for them, and except you attend to it, that you should be called a disorderly walker? I say, suppose that I were to take this stand; I certainly have as much, yea more, from the Bible, to back me in my position, as you can possibly adduce in support of yours. I have thus, Sir, considered the subject; much more might be said, but I have already swelled this letter beyond that which I at first apprehended; I shall, therefore, forbear to make any

further observations upon it, saving only this that I do not wish to debar you from your privilege of enjoying your own opinion upon the point of laying on of hands on private members; neither do I discard the idea myself. I hold it to be a *privilege;* and with such views we practice it. But Sir, I continue to dissent from *your ideas* respecting it, and this I shall consider to be my privilege to do, until my errors are shewn me by plain scripture testimony; choosing rather to take the word of God for the man of my counsel in matters pertaining to religious faith and practice,than to abide by the decision of my Six Principle Baptist brethren, especially in points where it evidently appears their decisions and the scriptures of truth do not agree. One point more, however, it might be considered by you essential to take notice of, which is the idea that is generally advanced by the advocates for the laying on of hands, that by the Holy Ghost's being given at the laying on of the apostles' hands, was a confirmation from Heaven, that the ordinance was ever to be attended to in the manner which you prescribe. If it were the case, that it was intended for an ordinance of the gospel, agreeable to *your interpretation* of the subject, it might probably be considered as a confirmation of the ordinance; but, with respect to the subject, as it lies before us, your arguments upon this head prove nothing to your purpose.

"There are many other remarks in your letter,that I would consider at large, if it were not for the reason above mentioned, of swelling this epistolary communication. Your remarks respecting my want of a belief in the scriptures, is exceedingly cruel and unjust, and your arguments adduced in opposition to the open communion, I consider to be hardly consistent with the declaration of our Saviour, John, 13, 35: By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another; and also with Matthew, 23, 8: For one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren, with numerous other passages

of the like nature, which could be easily brought forward. I, however, conclude, by just remarking, that it might be profitable probably for you, before you make another attempt to support, or rather confirm against us, an unscriptural and unjust charge,to count the cost, and consider whether you have scripture and reason at hand, to bear you out in your undertaking. You are unknown to me ; but, whether you are saint or sinner, I wish you well ; and if it is really the case, that you are a professed follower of the Lamb, and a Christian indeed, I subscribe myself yours in the gospel of Christ. RAY POTTER."

The reader will observe the result of my enquiries in relation to this subject. Nor was I alone in my difficulties and opinion. Brother T—m the pastor,and more than five-sixths of the private members were of the same mind. Brother T—m however, took the advice of the Deacon of the church who had advised him not to break the order of the people to whom we belonged, until he laid the subject before them in yearly meeting and thus to leave them in an honorable way, or words to this import. We therefore concluded to bear with the restrictions until the annual yearly meeting which was to be held in Johnson the ensuing September at which time we determined to lay the subject before them, and request liberty to enjoy the freedom of communing with those who had not been "*under hands.*" This getting rumoured about made "*no small stir,*" however, and we were visited before the meeting by one of the leading Elders of the order who laboured to prove us to be in error, and to vindicate the ideas of the Six Principle Baptists ; and also admonished us not to bring the subject into the yearly meeting. This threw us into a considerable of a trial ; for we saw no hopes of deliverance from this quarter at all. After the meeting assembled, we were in great perplexity to know what course to take, but inasmuch as I had been appointed a messenger from the Cranston Church, and before my appointment had told the church that I could no longer agree with the

Six Principle Baptists in respect to the idea of laying on of hands, I thought I must make that known, or I might subsequently be accused of acting hypocritically under the cloak of a Six Principle Baptist in their Yearly Meeting when I was opposed to them—and thought it my duty also to state the same in relation to the principal part of the church. As I arose to speak however, I was ordered "*to sit down*," by the moderator, and this in succession according to the statement of some that were present, five times—of this I will not be positive. Brother T—m finally made himself heard a few minutes, and after some farther discussion I was permitted to say a few words, which I conceived to be my duty as stated above. We began to think this rather "cool treatment," nevertheless felt determined to pursue that course which we conceived duty had marked out.

I will here make another short extract from a statement of facts which I published not long after this, illustrative of this subject, and of our proceedings.

"Soon, however, after the Yearly Meeting, by request, Elder T—m broke bread to the church of Christ in Burrillville, which was raised up under the instrumentality of the late beloved and pious Elder John Colby, and which is a church in connexion with the people generally termed *Free Will Baptists*. This was considered by his opponents as sufficient cause for his impeachment as a transgressor of the rules of the Yearly Meeting, &c. He, however, laid his proceedings before his brethren, in a regular church meeting, on which occasion there was present the most brethren and sisters, I think, that ever I had seen together at a church meeting. They universally approbated him, that were present, saving two, as will be seen in the letter which we sent unto the several churches, stating our determination to withdraw from their restriction.

"I would, however, observe, that at a church meeting a month previous to the one just mentioned, the brethren who were opposed to our proceedings stated

their grievances to us, and their determination not to move from the close communion, &c. together with other conversation, which, although they might feel justified in, yet unto me it appeared to be exceedingly unjust towards brother T—m, and seemed as it were to almost rend his heart. This was the last time that they ever met with us, in church meeting excepting the two following, as mentioned above. Elder T—m now gave liberty or an invitation to other denominations to come to the communion table. Not long after this, it was rumoured that a council was to assemble at Cranston, to setupon the concerns of the Cranston church. I could not put confidence in the report, as I knew that the church, as a body, knew nothing about such a proceeding. I went, however, with brother T—m to the brother whom I understood had reported the story. Not long after we had entered the house, he introduced the subject, I think, in the following manner. He observes, "I suppose you have heard that a council was to meet at Cranston, on such a day ?" &c. We told him we had heard such a report, but could not put confidence in it, as we knew that the church, as a body, never had authorised the calling of a council, and indeed that they, in a church capacity, knew nothing about it. He observed that *that* made no difference,or words to that import,and that he had a right to call a council to advise with him, &c. We requested him to explain the matter to us ; accordingly he informed us, that he met Elder M. in the road but a few days ago, upon which, conversation took place between them, relative to the Cranston church ; that Elder M. thought that a council ought to be called, and that he made answer that he thought so too ; and that accordingly the men were nominated and the business concluded between them two on the spot. This circumstance I state, not with a disposition to injure the brother who was engaged in it, but justice demands that I should do it, in order to give a fair statement of the facts which have transpired. The council accordingly, as I before observed, were select-

ed, nominated and appointed to meet at Cranston upon a certain day. I think that there were five Elders chosen, but only three of them attended. Their advice was, that the twelve members who were opposed to Elder T—m and the rest of the church, ought to be considered the standing church, and of course, to have power to deal with all the rest of us as they think proper. This twelve, I believe, at that time, made about one sixth part of the church."

We now forwarded to the several churches in the connexion, a circular containing resolutions of the church of which the following is the substance:

"*Voted*, That the proceedings of our church meeting of November 6, 1819, be transmitted to the several churches denominated Six Principle Baptist, with whom we were formerly in connexion, thereby informing them that this church did, on that day, positively and openly, in their regular church meeting, renounce the restriction of the Yearly Meeting, respecting the order of the communion, and consequently withdrew fellowship from them.

"*Voted furthermore*, That we are, and of right should be, a free, independent church of Christ, and do hereby deny the authority of the Yearly Meeting, with whom we have been in connexion, or any other general meeting, combination, or association of churches, to govern or to order the concerns of this church—believing that the scriptures of truth are alone sufficient, together with the spirit of God, to direct us in the government of the church of God; and that we are accountable to him alone, how we conduct the affairs of his kingdom."

Agreeably however with the advice of the council already referred to, these few members amounting to only about one sixth part of the church, proceeded in due form to excommunicate all the rest, consisting of more than sixty private members two Elders, and two Deacons! In addition to this, the Yearly Meeting pretended to the power of making void the ordination of Elder T—m, and passed a vote accordingly!!!

This was the first *feeling* lesson which I ever took on the subject of the *independency* of individual churches; and although as the proverb is, "*a burned child dreads the fire*," yet notwithstanding all my subsequent precautions, I once more got involved as I shall shew in the sequel. The conduct of the Six Principle Baptists in relation to this subject seemed to me to assimilate nearer to the image of popery, than to the New Testament rule of church government. Let it be remembered that there is no ecclesiastical power on earth exceeding the power of an individual regularly constituted church, and that no combination, Yearly Meeting, Bishop or Pope, have any right to interfere with their privileges.*

In the mean time I continued preaching in Providence. We had not continued our meeting there more than a month, before there began to be a sound of rain. The meetings were crowded, and the congregation attentive. Numbers came, who had not been in a habit of attending meeting any where, previously to our coming there. The first token for good which I discovered, was perhaps on the first Sabbath in May, when after preaching in the morning, I was invited by a stranger home with him to dine. I found that he had lately been bereaved of a darling child, and himself and his wife were earnestly enquiring what they should do to be saved. They were soon both of them hopefully converted, and became eminently useful; the brother a Deacon in the Church for some time, but is now fallen asleep, and has I trust entered into the rest that remaineth for the people of God. Their house was ever my home, while I laboured in Providence, and O may I ever be grateful for such friends, and may *they* be rewarded an hundred-fold in this life, and with endless joys beyond the grave. A gradual revival now progressed through the summer, and in-

* A most excellent discourse has lately been printed on this subject, entitled "The Platform, or Ecclesiastical Government established by the Lord Jesus Christ." Text, Math. xviii. 15, 16, 17. By an eminent divine of New-England.

creased more powerfully in the fall and winter. The preaching of brother T. was much blessed to the awakening of sinners, and I believe that I may say with propriety, that the last great revival of religion which spread through Providence, first commenced in these meetings which we established in the north end of the town. Many I trust will praise God in eternity that ever they attended them. We are prone to look *too high* for Christ. How far from the simplicity of the gospel is much that is called religious worship in these days. God generally revives his work in a way and by the use of means to promote his own glory, and humble the proud heart of man. He takes the weak and foolish things &c. to accomplish his purposes that no flesh may glory in his presence. On this ground I account for the blessing which attended our meetings, and not for any excellency or greatness in us. There were I think nearly eighty members raised up there to sit together in heavenly places in less than a year; besides numbers who were awakened and brought into the liberty of the gospel among us who joined other Churches. I was a wonder to myself this season; for, notwithstanding I was so weak in body that on Sabbath mornings I frequently felt scarcely able to keep from my bed, and used to be under the necessity of *holding on,* sometimes, upon the railing of the desk where I stood to speak, to preserve myself from falling, yet I generally preached three times a day, and also with a renewal of strength; almost always feeling better after the last sermon, than,when I first commenced speaking. The Lord was good notwithstanding all my blindness and vileness in his sight, and I bless his name forever.

The subject of my *ordination* was now brought before the church,which had for some time been contemplated, but on account of the difference of opinion existing between the Six Principle Baptists and myself, I could not feel liberty in my mind to be ordained in their order; although the importance of the subject bore with great weight on my mind, and I went forward with

trembling. Yet, conceiving it to be my duty, I submitted to the call of my brethren, and accordingly a day was appointed to attend to the solemn services.—Elder Henry Tatem, pastor of the Cranston church, together with Elders Dudley Pettengale, and Jonathan Woodman, were to *officiate* in the ordination. The two last were members of what is generally termed the "Free Will Baptist Connexion," who first spruug up through the instrumentality of Elder Benjamin Randall, of New-Hampshire, about 30 years since.—They hold to open communion , and accordingly there appeared to be no difference in sentiments between them and the Cranston Church, although we did not particularly belong to their connexion.

The day arrived and the services were attended to. Elder Zalmon Tobey made the introductory prayer; Dr. Gano, of Providence, preached an excellent sermon from II Cor. iv. 2; Elder Tatem prayed at the imposition of hands; Elder Pettingale gave the charge; and Elder Woodman the right hand of fellowship. At the time I was ordained, I was keeping a large school in Cranston, which I continued through the winter, although my labours in the ministry were confined principally to Providence, about six miles from where I resided. This distance I used to generally travel on foot, back and forth, to attend my appointments; sometimes after keeping school all day, walking in, preaching, and returning the same night. Notwithstanding my health was bad, I averaged about five sermons a week, besides attending to my school. Towards the close of winter, I obeyed an impression which I had felt for some time, to go and preach at the manufacturing establishment where I was clerk, when so low in religion, mentioned above. My preaching here was blessed; a goodly revival to appearance took place, and a number of souls gave evidence of hopeful conversion to God. I hope to meet them in a better world, although the most of them are now scattered abroad. It is well for us, if we have lived in a backslidden state before the world, to take up the

stumbling blocks which we have laid in their way, lest their blood be required at our hands, in the day of eternity! Reader, beware.

In the spring of this year, I thought it my duty to remove out of my father's house, where I had been living the past year. My parents were advanced in years, and had already reared up a large family, by indefatigable industry, and although at this time I was not expensive to them for the comforts of life, yet my family were increasing, and I wished not any longer to trouble them with the noise and bustle of children. Let the last days of the aged be quietness, repose and retirement, so far as is practicable. I was not decided where to pitch my tent—for I felt as one in the wilderness, having here no continuing city, but journeying to a better country, a land of rest!

My anxiety was for the welfare of the band of brethren and sisters in Providence. There was no prospect of obtaining from them, however, scarcely any thing towards the support of my family, for they were universally poor. My object was, therefore, to get as near them as I could, so that I could preach to them, and at the same time teach a school, and thus travel on Mount Zion-ward. At this juncture I had invitations from two different places to preach, with the prospect, *humanly* speaking, of a handsome support.

At Johnson the people were extremely urgent that I should come and preach to *them*, or at least one half of the time. Although I loved the people, yet I informed them that I could make no contract how much or how long I would preach for them; but if I could hire a house, and obtain a school in the neighbourhood, I would come over, and preach there as much as I felt it *my duty*, and if any man, of his own freedom, felt it a duty to bestow aught upon me, I felt willing to accept it, if it were but two mites; provided the bestower was not *quite so poor as myself.* There did not appear, however, any probability of my ob-

taining a school there at the present time, yet finding a tenement, cheap and commodious, I hired it, and determined, God willing, to move my family into Johnson. After making the necessary arrangements I left my parents' house about the middle of April, 1820, and bid adieu to the town of my nativity, where I had resided the most of my time from my birth, about twenty-five years. This was rather an affecting scene, and occasioned some lonesome and melancholly reflections. I had now a wife and four small children. As to food and raiment, through the tender mercy of God, I had *sufficient for the day*, and that was about all; and all the money I had was two or three dollars, not knowing neither, humanly speaking, where any more was coming from. But this was more than Jesus had, and he did not frequently work miracles for his support, nor to obtain money neither.

Let us be well persuaded—first, that we are called of God to preach—and secondly, let us be determined to preach where and when it appears to be our duty, trusting in him who hath called us. I expect the devil very often tempts men to give ministers a *loud call* (a great salary) in order to draw them away from the work of God. What sort of faith is ours if we will not give as much credit to the word of God as we do to the word of man. "Seek first the kingdom of God, &c. &c. All these things shall be added unto you." This is God's word and *you will not believe it.* Come and preach for us and we will give you five hundred dollars a year or more; this is man's word, and *you will believe it.* What an insult on the majesty of heaven! Do not think that I mean to say a word against the support of ministers—it is the counsel of God that they *should be supported*, and woe be to that church or people that neglects their duty in this respect. I only mean to say that any man who will not trust the promise of God, for *temporal blessings*, will not trust him for *eternal blessings*, or the salvation of his soul, and that we should enter into the field *before* we expect to eat, and then *if we have it*

as fast as we need it, that is just enough. With this we should be content, without taking a world of pains to prevail on poor sinful worms, who are themselves entirely dependent on God, to guarantee the payment of his bond, nor suffer the fear of man to keep us back from declaring the whole counsel of God, lest some men of *consequence* should erase their signatures, and so the obligation become null and void!!! O for Abraham's faith. But I wander.

I gave all diligence to attend to what I conceived my duty, generally preaching evenings during the week after school, travelling on foot to attend my appointments. I preached in Providence, Cranston and Johnson, on Sabbaths, sometimes walking 15 or 20 miles on foot, and preaching three times in a day, was frequently so exhausted as to be obliged to throw myself on the ground and wait for a recruit of strength. On Saturday evening June 8, 1820, I preached my first sermon in Pawtucket. Numbers had been in a habit of attending my preaching in Providence, from Pawtucket, a distance of about four miles; some of whom were awakened. They importuned me to pay them a visit and attend a meeting. I accordingly attended on the evening mentioned above, and preached from the words of John the Baptist, "who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" It appeared to be an evening of the manifestation of the power of divine grace in awakening sinners; some cried aloud, and many wept; apparently in deep distress. This is the way God led me unto this place. It was not of my own seeking. When I came to preach the first time, I had no calculation of ever coming again, but the unexpected attention of the people I thought a proof that it was my duty to preach more to them. I made an appointment next morning at 8 o'clock, and so from that time preached occasionally until I removed into the place; while sinners by scores were soon hopefully converted through my instrumentality. My labours in the ministry increasing, (particularly after my introduction into this place) render-

ed it impossible for me to attend to my school and answer all the calls of preaching to those who were ready to perish. I must either curtail the one or give up the other. This produced another trial. I here make a short extract from my diary :—

"*Monday Morning*, *July* 17—Went from Pawtuck-
"et home to Johnson; but being hindered, failed of
"being in time for my school. I was now brought to
"pass through a trying scene. I was convinced that I
"could not possibly attend to my school, and contin-
"ue my present labours in the ministry. I had al-
"ready almost worn my life away by endeavouring to
"attend to *both;* but do all I could, I must fall short of
"attending properly to the duties devolving upon me
"under present circumstances; it remained therefore
"for me to determine whether to continue *my* school
"and curtail my labours in the ministry *very conside-*
"*rably*, or to let my school go, and devote my whole
"time to preaching."

"It was a struggling time with me for a short time,
"for notwithstanding my mind was deeply impressed
"with the importance of the subject of giving myself
"up wholly to the work whereunto I conceived the
"Lord had called me, yet there were mountains of
"difficulties in the way. I had a family considerably
"large and dependant, was without property or a
"stated salary, but barely a sufficiency to supply our
"present wants. In this situation I was brought
"again to a trial of my faith, having no other depen-
"dence for future temporal support, than to trust in
"the unseen providence of God. But faith prevailed.
"I knew God had remarkably opened ways for my
"deliverance in times past, and that he was able to
"still deliver; and as I was convinced that God had
"a work for me to do, felt resolved to *unconditionally*
"submit to it, and accordingly dismissed my school;
"and the language of my soul was, 'Here Lord, I
"give myself away—'tis all that I can do.' After I
"had come to this conclusion, I felt a good degree of
"peace of mind, with confidence in God that he would
"not suffer me to want for any good thing."

On the 13th of September, 1820, I joined the Free Will Baptist connexion formally, and received the right hand of fellowship at Smithfield, from Elder John Buzzell, of Parsonsfield, State of Maine. This is a memorable day to me, for I involved myself in difficulties of a serious nature.

The church in Cranston not being in particular connexion with any large denomination, I thought I must be like the *other nations, and have a king;* and having for some time almost idolized the Free Will Baptist connexion, I concluded to fall in with them. I hesitated however almost a year after I was ordained, before I took this step, for the conduct of the Six Principle Baptists towards the Cranston church, put me to thinking very seriously on the importance of the subject of the independent plan of church government, and I became quite tenacious on that point. I nevertheless thought the connexion above mentioned were so "free," yes, so *very free*, that there could be no danger of a tyrannical usurpation over individual churches among them. My friends, however, many of them, bid me beware of the consequences of the movement I was about to make, lest I found myself in as bad a condition as the one from which I had just been extricated. I told the Free Will Baptist preachers their fears, but they made answer that there could be no danger, as they professed to walk *alone* by the scriptures. I conversed much with Elders Woodman and Pettingale, who assisted in my ordination, on the subject. I have no doubt but what it was in consequence of our being so fearful in respect to this point, that Elder Buzzell, in the first number of his Religious Magazine, Vol. 2, published some time this summer of 1820, when giving an account of the order of the Free Will Baptist connexion has this language:

"Each Church has the *exclusive right* of doing their own business among themselves, and with the assistance of an ordained elder, of admitting members, or of admonishing or even rejecting them if need require, agreeable to the rules of Christ and the Apostles, &c."

If we did not know that mankind are selfish and depraved, we should hardly believe that this very connexion, some of them, (I do not say all) would in about two years after this, claim jurisdiction and control, not only over churches *in* their connexion, but over one which *never joined their connexion at all;* and by dint of this, kidnap a meeting house, &c. &c.; but this was the case, as I shall have an occasion to shew in the sequel ! ! On the 7th of October, of this year, (1820) a number of brethren and sisters in Pawtucket, most of whom had been converted through my instrumentality, covenanted together, and were organized into a church. I was unanimously chosen their pastor. The particulars of this transaction I shall give in another place.

Reflections.

In reflecting on the foregoing Chapter, I see plainly that persons may be Christians ; truly born of the Spirit of God, and yet be *exceedingly* erroneous in their views of the doctrines of the gospel. No person will ever convince me to the contrary ; because I am *perfectly satisfied* that I had religion at that time, and that I was really converted at the time mentioned in the commencement of this narrative. I loved God supremely at times, rejoiced in his government ; and holiness was to me sweet and desirable for its *own sake;* and in reading the best and closest writers who have written on the subject of true and false religious affections, such as Edwards, Bellamy and others, I have not in the least been cut off in my mind from the conclusion that I was at the time above mentioned, savingly brought to the knowledge of the truth ; but have been much strengthened in that opinion and hope. From this I learn to be careful how I *unchristianize* my Arminian brethren ; and lament to think that some who are Orthodox in doctrine speculatively, appear diposed to condemn them altogether, as being in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity, and I believe

one great difficulty with them in general, is, they have never *gone through* with their system *themselves*, thereby to see its consequences. To be sure, a person cannot be convinced of sin but by the law—the commandment must come, and the law must be seen to be holy, just and good ; and all who are savingly changed must have this view of it ; yet, still, they may *speculatively* get entangled in their minds respecting the law of God, and consequently imbibe very erroneous ideas concerning it ; and so as Dr. Bellamy says are better in *heart*, than in their *heads*. I believe as I have before said that wrong ideas (or rather having no idea) of the *law of God*, is the foundation of all heresy and wrong notions of Christian theology. Now this was the case with me at the time of which I have been speaking ; I believed in the possibility of falling from grace and of course that my salvation finally *turned* on my faithfulness, and abounded with the expression, I shall get to heaven if I am faithful, &c.; but as to *defining this faithfulness*, to find out *what it was*, I had not yet undertaken it. Now what *rule* must we try our faithfulness by ? Do the advocates of the falling plan consider this ? Reader, do not pass over this *lightly*, for it is a subject of vital importance; you will say, perhaps, *to be faithful I must do my duty*, keep the commandments ; and very well—what is your duty ? Do you understand this ? what is your duty ? *By what rule must you know your duty ?* This I am afraid you mistake in. Perhaps you have not thought seriously on this point. It is high time ; for if you try your faithfulness by a *wrong criterion*, which the scriptures do not warrant, you may *think* you are faithful when you are not—and so go down to hell when you are expecting to go to heaven! You think a person may be a saint to-day, and a devil and be damned to-morrow. I ask, what will be the occasion of his damnation ? sin, you answer—he was not faithful—he did not do his duty. Well what is sin ? by what rule will you find out ? Is not this important ? What do you suppose will damn *yourself*, if you ever fall away, and are

lost everlastingly? *Sin*, you say; for nothing else will ever damn any one. By what *rule* do you find out whether you are likely to be damned or not. Is not *this* important to know? Is it, that you have been converted, and that you now live a *decent life externally*, and have *some* holy exercises, and enjoy *some religion?* Is *this* the rule you try yourself by, to know whether you sin or not? Is this criterion to be found in the Bible? If it is, I wish to know the *Chapter and verse.* Reader, think of this? Have you tried your faithfulness by the word of God, or by some rule which *you have made yourself:* or that some denominations or controversial divines have made for you. To be *faithful* you say is to *keep the commandments*, is to do our duty, &c. Well I ask you *again*, what does God command us *to do*; and which if we do not, we sin? I will answer: That we should love God with all our heart. Can you deny this? You certainly cannot. All external performances without this, is like a sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. This is the rule of our duty to God, WHICH NEVER CAN BE ABROGATED OR ALTERED. See then whether you *love God with all your heart or not.* And be assured that every moment in which you do not exercise this supreme love to God, you sin, and according to your own system, lie exposed to hell. Is it not so? Be true to your system and own it—for you say a saint may fall away and be damned; and that nothing but *sin* can be the *occasion* of his damnation; and that the *law of God* is the only criterion to tell what sin is, you *cannot deny;* for the Apostle affirms that sin is the transgression of the law. And that this law is what I have stated above, you cannot deny, without giving the Almighty the lie direct; for the same is constantly affirmed to be the law from one end of the Bible to the other. Now it was the case with me, as I believe it is with all other Christians who hold to the falling plan, I did not *look into* this important subject. I did not *define* the faithfulness which would keep me from going down to the pit; for when once I came to

do this, I was obliged to renounce my sentiments or renounce all hope of heaven; and I firmly believe this would be the result of every Christian's enquiries upon this subject, if as I have before observed, they would *go through* with their system. As I before observed, I have no doubt but what I was a Christian at the time of which I have been speaking, yet if my *doings* were tried by *this rule of loving God with all my heart every moment*, I have no doubt but a great proportion of them would be found to be dross—yea, worse than dross, positive selfishness or sin. How much would be found to have proceeded from an impulse of pharisaical or spiritual pride, and how much was driven out of me through fear of falling away and going to hell, God alone can tell. One thing is certain; that at a subsequent period, when under great trials of mind respecting my state, I could not *myself*, look on this faithfulness of mine with any kind of complacency at all; and if it looked so to *me*, how must it have looked in the eyes of Him who searches the heart and who cannot look on sin with any allowance, whose law is perfect, requiring us to love him with all our heart and our neighbour as ourselves.

Now what is the faithfulness of those persons *good for*, who say, that if they were sure they should be saved, after they are once converted they would live in sin all their days, &c. when viewed through the glass of God's holy law or tried by this rule? What do they think will damn them if they are damned? *Sin*, they must answer. Well, I ask, what does the whole of their faithfulness amount to, but one great mass or general undeviating course of sin? For what is sin? Answer—a transgression of the law. What is the law? Answer—*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c.* but they positively affirm that all which induces *them* to pursue a religious course is *the fear of being damned*, and so acknowledge they *do not* love God; for if they love God they must love his law; his law being a complete transcript of his moral character, and any novice must see, that if they love

the law, they will obey it. So they clearly demonstrate that if they act from the principles which they affirm they do, their faithfulness amounts to nothing but complete *unfaithfulness*, selfishness or sin—so that if God be true and his law stands, their faithfulness instead of saving them will completely damn them! for sin is a transgression of the law, and the law *is*, that we shall love God with all our hearts. Reader, have you ever *looked into* this subject? If you believe in the possibility of falling from grace, be consistent and true to your principles—acknowledge that every moment you do not love God with all your heart you sin, and consequently lie exposed to eternal damnation. Now it is evident that Arminians who oppose the doctrine of the saint's perseverance, and other doctrines, of being saved *entirely by grace*, do not have clear ideas respecting the law of God. This I have observed universally to be the case in the writings of all which I ever consulted. They confuse the mind and darken counsel by words without knowledge. They talk about our being under the evangelical law of *sincere obedience*—the law of faith, &c. &c.

Thus says Mr. Fletcher: "Should Mr. Hill ask if "the Christian perfection which we contend for, is a "sinless perfection, we reply: '*Sin is the transgression* "*of a divine law*, and man may be considered either "as being under the anti-evangelical, Christless law "of our Creator; or as being under the evangelical, "mediatorial law of our Redeemer: and the question "must be answered according to the NATURE OF THESE "TWO LAWS"!!!

Here it is, with a witness. Now I wish to know where, in all the book of God, we have *two* laws, differing in their *nature*, to try a man by, to know whether he be a sinner or not. I invoke the genius of all the admirers of Mr. Fletcher's system, in Europe and America, to point them out. Is this *bible* language, my reader? No; it is a direct subversion of scripture. Does the bible say, "by the *laws* is the knowledge of sin?" Does it say, "sin is a transgression of the *laws*?"

Does it say, "the *laws* is a *school-master* to lead us to Christ?" Or does it say the *law*, meaning the one unalterable law of God to intelligent beings, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart?"

Mr. Fletcher makes these laws to differ in their *nature!* He calls this law which I have just named, an anti-evangelical law. What are we coming to next? Did the law proceed from God? Yes. Did the gospel proceed from God? It did. And is the one anti—or opposed to the other? Are the divine perfections quarrelling? Horrible. Now these vague, *anti-scriptural notions* of the law of God, make dreadful work in the Christian world. Reader, dare you say that there are two laws, both a transcript of the moral character of God, *differing in their nature?* By which is the knowledge of sin? But you may think, possibly, that this was merely a slip of the pen; that this was not the idea that Mr. Fletcher meant to communicate. I answer, it is the idea which *he does inculcate* clear through his writings, when speaking on the subject at all. Nor is this idea *peculiar to him* neither; it is to be found in the writings of all Arminians of note, whom I have ever consulted.

Thus Mr. Wesley says, "Hence the best of men may say from the heart,

> "Every moment, Lord, I need
> The merit of thy death,"

"for innumerable violations of the *Adamic* as well as "the Angelic law. It is well therefore that we *are* "*not under these*, but under the law of love."

Here it is again, with a point blank self-contradiction at the end of it. For in the very same sentence that he says we are not under the Adamic law, he says we are under the law of love. The law of love? Any thing short of loving God with all the heart? Nay, I presume no one will dare say this. If they should, I would ask them, why are we not required to love God with all the heart *now*, as well as Adam? Has God become less holy?!!

Well, is it because we are sinful and unholy? If so, a man's unholiness or sinfulness constitutes his justification before God!! What need of Christ, then, for sin will save the world! Reader, I am not jesting—this is the very consequence of the Arminian ideas in respect to this point. Thus they reason: "No man can be obliged to keep this law; for no man can exercise principles which he has not; for that implies a contradiction. But we have lost the power of yielding perfect obedience in Adam. WE cannot love God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves. WE are not to blame for not doing that which we cannot do. This law is too *severe* for a fallen world. Christ has died for us, and so the law is abated." And they talk also abundantly about our present *infirmities* and unavoidable weaknesses, errors in judgment, weakness of memory, &c. since the fall. Now let it be ever imprinted on the tablet of your memory, reader, that the law of which we are speaking, is given to the *heart* of man; that God never required any more of *Adam*, than he requires of *us*, in this respect. He required Adam to love him with *all his heart*, and no more; for this includes all obedience. This, says Christ, is the first commandment, and the second is like unto it; that is, it grows out of it. If God has our hearts, he will have our heads, our hands, our feet, and in short all our natural powers. And he never required more. He never required a being to exercise a judgment, memory, sight, hearing or any faculty which he did not possess. This is all vain jangling: a sound without substance. And this talk about *two laws*, by which is the knowledge of sin, is horrible in its consequences. Only think, reader, of this idea: Christ has died to abate the law; or to abrogate it or bring it down to man's fallen and sinful state. Was the law unjust in its requirements of sinful man *antecedent* to the idea of Christ's dying to abate it? If so, who gave this unjust law? You are obliged to say that God gave an unjust law to man!!! and what then? Why, that

Christ the Son came down and died an ignominious death to prevail on his father to do man justice by abrogating the law or making it "milder and more lenient!!" But you say, perhaps the law was given to holy Adam, and *of him* it might justly require sinless or perfect obedience, but his posterity being *sinful*, and having *fallen* far from the primeval holiness of Adam, it would be cruel and unjust to consider *them* under the law. Well *if* it be so, then Christ need not have come to save them; for what need of grace where the law does not justly condemn? According to this hypothesis, Christ might have stayed in heaven; men's *sinfulness* would have excused them for breaking God's holy law, and of course all mankind, (only excepting Adam and Eve) might have gone to heaven; not by the works of the law, nor by the gospel of Christ, but by their moral depravity or sins!!! Now, reader, this is the *sure consequence* of this notion, that the Adamic law is done away or made milder or accommodated to the sinful state of man. Let it be remembered that as long as God exists, and Angels, men and devils exist, this moral law must stand—*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind*"—and that this law is alike binding on angels, men and devils; and that the devil is just as much under a moral obligation to keep it as the angel Gabriel, and that all the reason why he is a devil, *is because he does not keep it*,—and that all the reason why men are bad, or sinners, is because *they* do not keep it. And remember, that this is the only infallible *rule*, the unalterable criterion, by which you are to judge of your holiness or sinfulness, your faithfulness or unfaithfulness. Now, Christian reader, take *this glass*, and hold it up before you, and in it behold your life from day to day: mark your thoughts, words and deeds: watch your heart and see *how constantly* you have this supreme love to God, and do all which you do, to His glory; and remember that every moment you come short of this, you are liable to be struck dead and sink to hell, if the doctrine

of falling from grace be true. But say you what does that passage mean; "Ye are not under the law but under grace." Thanks be to God it means just what it says, or we should be without hope. It does *not* mean that a saint after becoming interested in the covenant of grace, is put under a *covenant of works* again, which makes his salvation uncertain. No; this is *Arminianism.* It does not mean that the law of God is *destroyed* or done away, and is no longer *a rule of life* for believers; so that let them do what they will they cannot sin. No, this is horrible *Antinomianism.* Nor does it mean that the grace of God has *softened down* the moral law of God, or rather made a milder law. This is also Arminianism, and this I have all along been shewing to be impossible in the nature of things. It means or implies this; that the saints in the first place are found justly condemned by the moral law—that they are redeemed from the *curse of the law by Christ.* That is, that Christ has made an atonement for sin, which renders it possible for a Holy God to *forgive* sinners of their transgressions of his law, and yet not do violence to his law or abrogate or disannul it. That saints are thus freely *forgiven* for Christ's sake, and at the same time become interested in the *new covenant* of grace which secures their final salvation. Not that the law does not *continue to be a rule of life* for them; nor that they *do not sin*, when they transgress it, and *considered in themselves*, are justly condemned; but that by the first act of faith they having become *entitled* to eternal salvation, according to the free grace and promise of God, he will continue to carry on the good work which he has begun in them, until the day of the Lord Jesus, *causing* them by the influence of his Holy Spirit to *exercise renewed acts of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of all their trespasses.* This, reader, is what is meant by being under grace. A glorious way of salvation, that secures the honours of God's law, and yet the sure salvation of the believer—a plan that *causes the saint to continue*

to the end, and preserves him from falling finally away —a way that humbles the *saint*, and *exalts* the free, *unmerited grace of God*—a plan that teaches us that our salvation depends on the promise and grace of God in *keeping* us from finally falling away, and not on *our faithfulness* in improving the grace of God.

I have been more lengthy in these remarks than what I first contemplated; but the subject has required it. Reader, examine what I have written, and if it be the counsel of God, reject it not against yourself. Remember what you do when you maintain the possibility of the damnation of the sheep of Christ, that you put them under the *law*, exposed to its final curse, and exposed to hell and everlasting burnings every moment that they *do not keep the law;* and I charge you not to be hypocritical; ashamed of the doctrine of the saint's perseverance, and arguing against it, and at the same time, gathering up all your comfort and hope of heaven *from it.* Hope for heaven on your *own ground*, or according to your *own system*, by keeping the law; or as you say by doing your duty. And this I have shewn you can be *nothing less than keeping the moral law.* Don't *make* a law for your justification which God has never made. Don't *alter* that which *he has* made, but be honest, and let the law stand and judge yourself by it, and see where you will land. This is the way that I was driven out of that darling doctrine to our self-righteousness, the possibility of the damnation of those whom God says shall never perish, as I shall presently shew.

CHAPTER VI.

Extraordinary trials, and apprehensions of having fallen irrecoverably away—Fears of having committed the unpardonable sin—Glorious deliverance, &c. &c.

An interesting era in my experience now drew nigh. As I have before observed, I was indefatigable in my labours in the ministry, that I might meet God in peace. The shock which my constitution had received, and my extreme nervous weakness kept me constantly looking into eternity, and the spasms which I was still subject to, often caused apprehension that death was at the doors. I continued to preach as long as I could until I sunk under the weight of my infirmity, about the first of November. I was seized with the spasms and expected probably to die suddenly. I felt unprepared to go. I believe I now tried my past faithfulness by the rule which I have been insisting upon in the foregoing reflections—although in my speculative notions and arguments on the subject, I entertained quite different views of the law, or rather I had *no consistent*, but quite *confused views;* yet, now, when considering myself on the brink of eternity, the Spirit of God set home the law or commandment in its true requirements. I viewed myself in the *true glass*, was frightened at my own visage and filled with horror. There is no doubt, but what all men will be obliged, *sooner or later*, to view themselves in this mirror, and judge themselves by this rule; for whatever men may say in order to abrogate the law, or soften down its requirements, in order to ease their consciences *for a while;* yet, when God shows them their *true characters*, it is by *contrasting* them with *his holiness*, or the requirements of his law. Thus when I looked into eternity, and up to a holy God, and then looked at *my faithfulness*, O, what horrible sensa-

tions seized my trembling soul. Although I did not doubt but what I had experienced religion at the time I supposed I did, and had enjoyed some religion since that time; yet my system taught me that my final salvation depended on my faithfulness in improving the grace I had received; and this, *I then saw plainly I had not done*, as it had been my duty. I was perfectly consistent in looking for salvation in this way, and thus acted up to my principles; and I am persuaded that if all who believe in the final apostacy of the saints would do the same, the *consequences* would be the same as with me; viz: to see that if the doctrine of falling from grace be true, no soul will ever get to heaven.

No person, perhaps ever tried the system more thoroughly than myself; and yet when I came to review my faithfulness as in the presence of God, O how full of holes was my self-righteous garment. I could but abhor myself in dust and ashes—and as I had fallen short of sinless perfection in my religious course I verily thought I must be damned. This, I would observe again, was perfectly consistent with my Arminianism. It was a fair inference from the premises which my views of doctrine established; for instead of looking for evidences (by being conscious of holy exercises of heart) that I was interested in the *covenant of grace*, which by the promises of God insured to me the final forgiveness of all my sins, and consequently eternal life, I was examining myself to see if I had *not fallen away*. I found indeed that I had fallen *far short of my duty*, and of course had fallen away; for what could it be to fall away, but to come short of my duty; so there I was, without hope, notwithstanding all my past strivings. Now this is the way that every person who believes in falling from grace must deal with himself, if he will be honest, consistent, and stick to his principles. And where is *the one*, on reviewing his past life, and trying himself or his past faithfulness, by the rule that God tries our faithfulness by, but what will have to acknowledge that he has been unfaithful

and consequently has *fallen away*, and so, of course is without hope. This was my case. As I before observed, I was filled with horror, and felt unprepared to meet God. I cried to God to spare my life—with vows that I would live better. My life was preserved, and as I recovered my health, I strove more and more *to keep the law*. I fasted much, and was so full of fear of doing wrong, that I scarcely dared do any thing at all. But my *faithfulness* looked worse and worse. O how much spiritual pride, and pharisaical self-conceitedness, I could see mixed with my past labours. I found in many instances my heart had deceived me. I continued in this state a short time, until I was overtaken with a trouble of mind that exceeded all which I had hitherto experienced. I think it was on Saturday before the third Sunday in November; as I was walking across a pasture to one of my neighbours, that I was suddenly overwhelmed with a horror and darkness of mind that was dreadful beyond description, and which seems to have been almost equal for the time it lasted, to the despair which damned souls experience in hell. I am ready to tremble when I think of it. The thoughts that produced this dreadful darkness were that I had sealed my condemnation, and that God had cast me off forever!! I fell down and tried to pray, but all seemed shut up, and I conceived that mercy was clean gone; the day of grace with me had closed; and that I must lie down in eternal despair. O my God, what sensations of soul were these! how far beyond what men or angels can describe. I returned to the house, but I was a terror to my companion and children. The paleness of death was on my cheek, and trembling seized my whole system. I knew not what to do, nor where to flee. I had an appointment to attend a church meeting in Providence that evening, and as I knew not how to contain myself or sit still at home, I proceeded thither. But the horror of mind which attended me seemed almost ready to take away animal life, and indeed I know

not that I could long have lived under such thick clouds of terrible darkness, if there had not been now and then momentary beams of light breaking through; that *possibly* it might not be that my damnation was sealed. These transient visitations of hope, were, comparatively speaking, like a single spark of fire glimmering a moment in total darkness and then disappearing. I attended the church meeting in Providence, but was undoubtedly a wonder to my brethren. They were young in experience and knew not how to offer me a word of consolation. I begged their prayers, but felt as if "He had hedged me about that I could not get out, and had made my chain heavy." Lam. iii. 7. This was a night never to be forgotten. The next day being the Sabbath, I had an appointment to preach in Providence. I repaired to the place appointed and attempted to speak, but after saying a few words I sunk to my seat, utterly unable to proceed, and completely overwhelmed in the horrors of despair. At intermission, I baptized two candidates, and in the afternoon a large congregation assembled to hear me. I did not attempt to speak, but in silence mourned my wretched, and, as I thought, hopeless case. There appeared to be universal astonishment excited in the minds of all the people. They gazed at me and wondered. "The terrors of hell got hold on me." I strove sometimes to pray, but the heavens seemed shut; with the dreadful idea continually rushing into my mind, that I had committed the unpardonable sin. Although this seemed rooted in my mind, yet I could not conceive what *particular sin* I had committed, that put the seal of final reprobation upon me. At length I concluded it must be for publishing to the world, the conduct of the Six Principle Baptists towards the Cranston Church and Elder T—m. I *knew I had published the truth*, but conceived that by making their conduct more publick, I had done the dreadful deed. Thus did the devil make havoc with me. I told the people that I thought this was

the case, in hopes, (if I had any hopes) that by speaking of it I should feel better. But I was not at all relieved; my mind went from one thing to another, by doing which I had committed the sin unto death, and that there was no forgiveness.

My imagining that the day of grace was over, was perfectly consistent with my Arminian sentiments; for I would ask any Christian who believes this doctrine, and who does not *this moment* have an *assurance* that he is in the favour of God, *how he knows* that the day of grace is not forever gone. Does he not believe that there are many who were never converted, whom God has left to their own ways, and from whom mercy is clean gone forever? And if he believes that a sheep of Christ may perish, a Christian be lost, how does he know that the Spirit has not now taken its everlasting flight, and that God says of him as he did of Ephraim, he is joined to his idols, let him alone! But my ideas that I had committed the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, or that *particular sin* which we generally term the sin against the Holy Ghost, were indeed inconsistent, or not supported *by any system* of religion whatever; for I might have known that the sin referred to was of a *description and attended with circumstances*, which I could not impute to myself. It is a sin of the tongue, blaspheming with malice in the heart, that which we *know* to be of God; or declaring that the operations of the Holy Ghost are the work of the devil, when we know better; and this under the influence of malice or hatred. This seems to have been the case with the Pharisees unto whom Christ referred, when he speaks of the dreadful state of those who blaspheme against the Holy Ghost. I might have known therefore, that this was not my state, and thousands who are at times thrown into despair, from the apprehension that they have placed themselves beyond the reach of mercy by committing this sin, might know better, if they would only attend to the scripture account of it. Yet as I before observed, I was consistent with my principles,

in fearing that the day of grace was gone. I returned home on Monday, envying, as I passed along, the brute creation, their comparatively happy state; wishing that I had never been born, and would gladly have exchanged my situation for that of the meanest reptile which crawled on the earth. O how gladly would I have been annihilated.

I thought after I got home, that I would take the bible and open it, and see what passage I *should first cast my eyes on*, as the manner of some is to find out something about their state. I accordingly opened, and first cast my eyes on the 6th of Hebrews. "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened," &c. I closed the book with horror, conceiving this to be another token of my miserable state. Again I opened it, and cast my eyes on some expressions of Peter, when he speaks of the *latter end of some being worse than the beginning!* This farther confirmed me. I closed the book, not knowing how to contain myself, nor what to do; but immediately thought I would try the experiment once more, which I accordingly did, and the first place that met my eye, was where Jude speaks of *some to whom is reserved the mist of darkness forever!* None can conceive my feelings—three times successively had the case turned against me. I precipitately closed the bible; but soon the reflection occurred to me that this was no way for me to find out my state; that it was even tempting God; for although God may frequently have comforted his children, by providentially directing them or causing them to open the Bible to some passage when they were *not looking* for any such thing, which was adapted to their case; yet I had no authority to try my state in this way by opening the Bible, and judging myself by the first passage I met; without paying any attention to the context, or considering whether it was at all applicable to the case in any respect whatever. Let those who follow this course ask themselves *what authority* they have for it? and if they find none let them *begin to leave off*, lest they tempt God to leave them to

their own delusion. I saw plainly that in order to find out my state by the word of God, I must take *the whole of it together*, and if it condemned me or if my character *certainly did answer* to the description there given of those who had blasphemed the Holy Ghost; *then*, I might take it for granted, that I was undone; but that I had no right or that there was no reason in my taking the steps which I had, either in condemning myself or finding comfort. I felt some relieved, although I was yet filled with terrible apprehensions. During the week I preached twice, but so heavy was the load on my mind, that while I spake I could not raise my eyes from the floor of the house. Although I felt some relieved from the apprehension that it was forever too late for me to find mercy, yet I utterly despaired of heaven without I could attain to, and live in a state of *sinless perfection here*. I understood the Methodists to teach that doctrine, and so I called on the Methodist minister in Providence for advice and instruction how to attain to it. He conversed with me some time, and read to me some of Mr. Fletcher's writings on the subject. I returned home, and on my way borrowed one of the volumes of Mr. Fletcher's works, read it attentively, and earnestly prayed for the blessing of sanctification, as it is emphatically termed by the Methodists. I expected that if I received it I should *lose my animal strength*, and be something like a dead man until I should be made perfectly holy. I wrestled, strove and agonized, but all seemed in vain. Nevertheless I tried to believe against hope, and that passage respecting Abraham seemed to be powerfully applied to my mind. Rom. iv 18. Through this week I was alternately indulging a hope, that God would bless me, and then despairing of his favour ever being shewn, I was troubled at night with dreams extremely disagreeable and horrible.

On the next Sabbath, I had an appointment at Pawtucket, and proceeded there on Saturday. On my way I had such a view of the nature of sin, as I do not

remember of experiencing before. It looked to me so exceedingly disagreeable and hateful, and I *loathed* it so, that it actually seemed to have an effect on my animal frame, that I know not how to describe. Indeed, I had through the whole time of my trouble been exercised with similar views, and when some endeavoured to encourage me on the ground of past faithfulness, I could not endure to hear them ; so much did *my righteousness* disgust me.

I was welcomed by the brethren and sisters in Pawtucket, and had a more comfortable meeting that evening than I had enjoyed before, since my trials commenced. In the morning, I felt more confidence still, and was enabled, as I thought, to *trust in God.* I know not how to describe my feelings through the day. I felt comparatively speaking, like a person hanging over a dreadful gulph, just by one finger, fearing every moment that the hold would give way, and ruin ensue. I tried to believe in Christ—to cast my naked soul into his hands ; to risk my eternal all with him, and some how or other, I was kept tolerably comfortable in this way through the day, except for a short time, as I was about administering the Lord's Supper, when it seemed as if the powers of Hell were let loose upon me. I thought that although there might have been hope for me before, *yet now* there could be *none ;* as I had completed the work of reprobating myself by undertaking to administer such a holy ordinance when I was such a vile wretch. I felt while I was breaking the bread, as if I should fall right into eternal burnings. But I did not desist, but went through with the ordinance, and presently felt some better. I preached in the evening with some liberty, and have reason to believe uncommonly solemn and impressive.

I retired after preaching, to my lodgings, and a number came in and conversed a few moments, then retired, and I was left alone. I sat down, and as far as I can recollect, felt calm in my mind, and wholly unconscious of the extraordinary scenes which were soon to be exhibited to my astonished soul. Suddenly

the room seemed to be *filled* with *the glory of God.* I know it is impossible for me to find language to describe this wonderful manifestation of God's holiness. I do not say that I saw any natural light, or heard any voice, nor that I saw a supernatural being or beings, as having a body or parts. But I saw God's moral beauty or holiness ;—I seemed *overwhelmed in God's spirit ;* I had a view of holiness when I trust I was converted, and loved it ; but now it seemed as if God was all around me ; the divine beauty and glory *filled* the place where I was. O the transcendant beauty of holiness ! O the amiableness of God's moral character ! I had also a most solemn sense of God's majesty and great power. It seemed to me that I should be *dissolved* under this view of his glory and majesty. But the beauty of holiness was most delightful to my soul. God's people who have had a glimpse of it know that there is something in it unutterably glorious and beautiful. I besought God not to destroy me by his great power ; but to fill me with his love. I retired to my bed, and O such glorious views and exercises as I then experienced, angels never can describe. No sooner was the presence of God manifested to me, than many passages of Scripture flowed into my mind, where metaphorical expressions are used to illustrate God's holiness—particularly Mal. iii. 2, 3.

"*For he is as a refiner's fire, and fuller's soap,*" &c. ; and Revelations ii, 14. 15; "*His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire. And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace,*" &c. But how far short does the metaphor fall of expressing the thing itself. I *knew* that God filled the place ; I *knew, then*, that there was a God, and that he was manifesting himself to me. I had this knowledge and certainty communicated in a way which is *inexplicable* to those who have never experienced manifestations of God's holiness to their souls. I did not then have to *argue* the existence of a God *from his works*, or to establish premises and draw conclusions. I had the evidence direct ; I had it *intu-*

itively ;—God was there, and I *knew* it. I *knew* it because I *saw his holiness*—his *moral beauty*—his *transcendant divine excellency.* I *knew* it because his spirit filled the room, and the glory of the Divine Majesty shone around about me. I know not that I saw any natural light, as I before observed, yet there seemed to be a transcendant brightness exhibited to me—a brightness however, that I could as well see with my natural eyes *closed*, as with them opened. As for the *certainty* of the presence of God, it is impossible for me ever to be more certain of any thing whatever. I never was more certain that I saw the natural sun, or that I had hands and feet, or that I existed ; and yet I heard no voice—I saw no being as having a body like the shapes which we conceive of Angels, or the immortalized body of the Lord Jesus. But yet if one thing be *more certain* than another, which I ever saw, tasted, or felt, it was that *God was there.* I had no *natural* sight of him ; and yet I beheld his glory.

I hardly knew how to undertake to write these views and exercises ;—language seemed to me so inadequate to the task. It seems almost like tarnishing the subject. Other Christians that are more ready with language might do far better ; but still the thing can never be told from one *finite being* to another. How true are the words of scripture ; " eye hath not seen, the ear heard ; neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive of the things which God hath laid up for those who love him." *Yet notwithstanding this, God reveals them to his saints by his Spirit.* The manifestations of God's holiness, or the moral and spiritual beauty and glory of the ever blessed God, bring their *own evidence with them*, and give an infallible assurance to the soul. If I had seen a supernatural being professing to be an angel from heaven, telling me wonderful things, I should have had reason or room to doubt ; for Satan sometimes is transformed into an angel of light. If I had thought I heard a voice from heaven, declaring to me that my name was written in heaven, I might have had room to have

doubted—it might have been an illusion of the enemy. But as I before observed, these manifestations brought their *own evidence* with them. Holiness or the Holy Ghost, is *different from every thing else;* and the certainty that this is God, which attends an exhibition of God's holiness to the mind, arises from the *peculiar nature of holiness.*

It was not until two or three years after I experienced this gracious manifestation, that I read President Edwards' treatise on religious affections, and I cannot describe with what *satisfaction* I read it. I take the liberty of transcribing a few lines from it in reference to the assurance which attends divine manifestations of holiness. "A view of this divine glory *directly* convinces the mind of the divinity of these things, as this glory is in itself a direct, clear, and all conquering evidence of it; especially when clearly discovered, as when this supernatural sense is given in a good degree."—"He that truly sees the divine transcendant, supreme glory of those things which are divine, does, as it were, know their divinity intuitively; he not only argues that they are divine, but he *sees* that they are divine; he sees *that*, in them, wherein divinity chiefly consists; for in this glory which is so vastly and inexpressedly distinguished from the glory of artificial things, and all other glory, does mainly consist the true notion of divinity. God is God; and distinguished from all other beings and exalted above them, *chiefly by his divine beauty*, which is infinitely diverse from all other beauty." How much is contained in these words; and what a valuable work is the whole treatise—would to God that it were more generally read.

As I lay admiring, wondering and adoring, I had a view of the heavenly state of glorified saints, which seemed as plain, comparatively speaking, as to stand at the door, and look deliberately into a richly furnished room. Not that I saw a place like a room, or a house or a city, according to the *common conceptions* of such places, but I saw *what constituted* the heavenly

bliss of the saints—that they would dwell *in God ;*—enraptured with the beauty of his holiness, and swallowed up in the transcendant glory of God's moral perfections. I saw plainly why in the book of Revelations, gold and precious stones are used as metaphors to represent (as far as such natural things can represent) the glory of heaven : but O how infinitely short do all metaphors of natural things fall of exhibiting to the mind the blessedness of the heavenly state. O the shining superlative beauty of the mansions of bliss !! Holiness is the principal thing which constitutes heaven. I had long had one thing running much in my mind. I longed to know that my name was written in heaven. I thought much of that one thing—and O the wonderful condescension and goodness of God. At this time I had as plain a view of it as ever I did, that my name was written on a piece of white paper. I did not see any book, nor did I see any letters according to the common conception of books, or letters, or writing; but it was represented or exhibited plainly to my view, in a way that I am utterly unable to describe. I have sometimes thought that I would not mention this, that some might sneer at it as mere fancy or enthusiasm. But I am persuaded that candid Christians who understand my meaning, will not cavil at it. I never could be any clearer from all unfounded imaginations or fanciful notions than at this time. I have already spoken of the *certainty* of these manifestations from the *peculiar nature* of them. The same certainty attended this view—the same *holy unction*—the same *beauty of holiness*—and the same transcendant excellency of the moral attributes of God. O how good has God been to me, one of the meanest and most unworthy of all his children. He has shewn me wonderful things, which I mention not to exalt *myself*, but *his grace*. I had been much troubled with the fear of death. There appeared to me to be something very dreadful in death, *considered in itself*. When I attended funerals, and looked at the dead, I frequently was most sensibly struck with a sense of the terrible

aspect of death. At this time it was shewn me how completely death may be swallowed up in victory by the grace of God ;—that the saint who is favoured with the divine presence in his last moments, *does not see death;* his enraptured soul gazing with such supreme delight on the heavenly scenes which open to his view, that he passes from time into eternity, as a person would go out of a dirty kitchen into a palace, or as the children of Israel passed over Jordan dry shod ; there was no river there. O glory! glory ! glory !—O Death where is thy sting ? O Grave where is thy victory ? How calmly I could look on death ;—yea, how lovely was its appearance. I seemed to lie right at the door of the heavenly Jerusalem, gazing on its dazzling charms and beholding its unparalleled beauty. I had other views which I do not feel it my duty to relate. One thing however I will say, that my subsequent lot, my peculiar situation, the reproach which I have had to suffer for the sake of the truth, has not been a wonder to me, or rather these things have not come upon me *unexpectedly.* I am pretty well assured *where I am ;* the course I must steer ; and the final issue !—God's ways are not as our ways. He sometimes chooses the foolish things of this world to accomplish his glorious purposes, and comes to the children of men with his counsel and truth, in a way quite different from human devices or the calculations of men ; to prove them and see whether they will receive the truth or reject the counsel of God against themselves. Jesus Christ was despised and rejected of men in the days of his flesh, because he appeared in the low, humble, poor and unpopular manner which he did ; but wo to those who finally rejected him ;—his tremendous wrath fell upon them—and wo to those who now despise him in the persons of his ministers and saints. If they reject them, they reject him, and those who despise, "despise not man but God." In the great day of eternity many will see that they laughed to scorn and considered as the offscouring of all flesh, those who were sent to them by the Judge of all the earth to warn them to flee from the wrath to come !

Reflections.

In reflecting on the foregoing exercises, my mind has frequently been led to contemplate another subject, which has been considerably controverted for a few years past—viz. "*What constitutes the heart of a man*," or rather this question, "*in what does the moral imperfection of saints consist?*" The generally received idea has been that their imperfection consists in their exercises being *partly holy* and *partly sinful*; their holiest exercises being *mixed with sin*, or rather sin and holiness dwelling in the heart at the *same moment*. This idea has been considered by some late divines as absurd and unscriptural, and an impossibility in the nature of things, not only from the consideration that it is impossible to love and hate any object at the same moment, "but also that it is impossible to mix sin and holiness together. They maintain a different theory. "That the heart must consist in *volition*, or free *vol-* "*untary moral exercise*, and in nothing *previous* to it "or the *foundation* of it." That we never attach "praise or blame to the exercise of *perception*, or *rea-* "*son*, or *conscience*, or *memory*; but that "we do at- "tach praise or blame to the free, voluntary exercise "of *loving* or *hating*, of choosing or refusing." Consequently they say, that "the heart consists in *nothing* "*but moral exercises*. That it certainly does *not* con- "sist in perception, or reason, or conscience, or mem- "ory; for these are all natural faculties which are to- "tally destitute of every *moral* quality to which praise "or blame can be attached; but it may and does con- "sist in loving and hating, in choosing and refusing; "for these are free voluntary exercises, which are al- "ways *right* or *wrong*, and worthy of praise or "blame." That "we never approve or disapprove "of any thing in ourselves or others, but free voluntary "exercise; and God requires and forbids nothing but "free voluntary exercises in his word." That "all "that the divine law requires summarily, consists in "pure benevolence, and all it summarily forbids, con-

"sists in pure selfishness." That "benevolence is a "free voluntary exercise; and selfishness is a free "voluntary exercise; and every human heart consists "in a train of free voluntary, *benevolent* exercises, *or* in "a train of free voluntary *selfish* exercises, *or* in a train "of *both benevolent and selfish* exercises." That "a "*sinner's heart consists in a train of mere selfish affec-* "*tions;* but a saint's heart consists in a train of *both* "benevolent and selfish exercises." That "the best "of saints are imperfectly holy in this life; and their "*imperfection* in holiness consists in their *sometimes* "having holy and *sometimes* unholy affections." That "their holy and unholy affections are always *distinct* "and never blended together." That "their holy "exercises are never partly holy and partly unholy, "but perfectly holy; and their unholy exercises are "never partly but perfectly unholy." That "a train "of holy and unholy affections forms the heart of a "saint; but a train of constant *uninterrupted sinful* "*affections* forms the heart of a sinner." That "the "only proper notion of any human heart, as *distin-* "*guished* from all the powers or faculties of the mind, "is a series of free voluntary exercises or affections; "and the only proper idea of a good man's heart, as "distinguished from the heart of a sinner, is a train of "both holy and unholy affections or exercises." So "the heart of a saint essentially differs from the heart "of a sinner in this one respect, that the heart of a "saint has some holy as well as unholy exercises; but "the heart of a sinner has no holy exercises at all."

Now I acknowledge that this subject respecting the heart is *to me* the most difficult subject satisfactorily to understand and explain of any one in Christion theology, and although the system which I have just presented, does not *entirely* satisfy my mind or remove all difficulties, yet I confess that many of the statements appear to me scriptural and reasonable, far more so, than the old notions in relation to this subject; and when I review my experience at the time alluded to above, I know not how to get away from the

conclusion that they are correct ;—for that I saw my heart during those glorious manifestations to be *perfectly holy* I am entirely confident ; nor will any finite being ever convince me to the contrary ; and that since then, perhaps thousands of times, I have seen my heart to be *deceitful above all things and desperately wicked*, I am quite as certain. Now I confess, that with the idea of the heart of the saints being *always* partly holy and partly sinful, I know not how to reconcile these views. But with the idea that voluntary exercises or affections constitute the heart, and that the saint *sometimes* has one and *sometimes* the other, I see not but what those views may be reconcilable. It is admitted on all hands that the saints may see or have a view of their own hearts.

And that the saints have frequent views of their hearts as being *desperately wicked*, I believe none will deny ; but if they may see their hearts to be thus wicked, if they are so, why may they not see their hearts to be holy, if they are so, and if *exercises constitute the heart* (and I know not how this can be denied) and if the same volition or exercise *cannot be mixed*, and if it be impossible to have but *one* exercise or volition *at a time*, or at the same moment, then I see not but what the subject is plain so far—the deceitfulness and dreadful remaining wickedness of the hearts of the saints, consisting in the *inconstancy* of the heart ; and what will more deeply affect us with a sense of remaining moral depravity, than for us to say that we are so *inconstant* in our love to God? For us after we have seen the beauty of holiness, the loveliness of God's moral character, and at the time of such views felt to admire and love God with all our hearts, to detest sin and feel a desire never to sin any more, to be so soon caught away as we frequently are, with love to the world, and exercise unholy affections—I say such *inconstancy* is desperate wickedness indeed.

This view of the subject, it appears to me, will throw light on the exercises and ideas of the Methodist people, in respect to what they say on the subject of

"entire or perfect sanctification in this life. We very frequently hear of their testifying that they have experienced this blessing—that at such a time God gave them a *clean heart*—that they had views of their heart, at the time, being made as clean from sin as a piece of white paper, &c. Now, however *some* who talk thus may be enthusiasts, or hypocrites, and are utterly deceived themselves, or are trying to deceive others, yet I cannot believe that all of them are. No; I am far from adopting this sweeping mode of condemning them indiscriminately. And if it be true as we have before remarked, that the heart consists in exercises, &c. there is nothing *unscriptural* or *unreasonable* in their declarations thus far. For who dare say that they, as well as Christians of other denominations, may not have such manifestations of God to their souls, such clear discoveries of the Divine beauty, glory and excellency, as to love God, or holiness, with *all* their heart, and, at the *same time perceive or see that they do thus love God*, or that their exercises *at the time* of these views, manifestations, &c. are perfectly holy? Now I see nothing in this unreasonable or unscriptural at all; and however I differ from the Methodists on doctrinal points, yet I hope I feel disposed to do them justice; and I certainly should be as far from condemning all *that work* among them which they emphatically term sanctification, as wild fire or delusion, as I should be from considering in the same point of view the holy exercises which President Edwards speaks of, in his own experience, and that of others, in the great revival of religion of which he gives us an interesting account. *But as it respects their living for any considerable time together, a perfectly holy life, they are undoubtedly utterly mistaken about it.*— Indeed they do not pretend to be continually thus exercised, as they are at these extraordinary seasons, for they term these extraordinary seasons "*experiencing the blessing of sanctification,*" and subsequently *living the life of Christian perfection.* Now

the reader should be aware, as I have heretofore noticed, that they do not pretend to live perfectly holy, if judged by the *paradisiacal law*, as they term it, but as I have already mentioned, they consider themselves to be under a "*milder law*," the "evangelical law," &c. &c. &c.

So when we hear them contend that Christians live perfect in this life, we may remember *what law* they judge themselves by; and although this abrogation or alteration of the law of God, is altogether unscriptural, unreasonable and without any foundation in the nature of things; and, as I think I have already sufficiently shown, a most fruitful source of erroneous and wrong notions in respect to the great and glorious doctrines of Christ; yet that it is possible for real Christians to be entangled in this snare, and adopt these views in theory, and in controversy advocate the doctrine of Christian perfection as the Methodists do, I have not a doubt, while at the same time, if you bring them to try themselves by the law of God, instead of the law of Mr. Wesley, or Fletcher, or some other divine, they will readily acknowledge that they sin daily, and come short of the glory of God. This was the case with me—for notwithstanding I was sure that what I experienced at the time mentioned in the foregoing Chapter, was a wonderful work of God, that my exercises *at that time* were perfectly holy, and my heart free from sin; and notwithstanding I followed the track of Wesley and Fletcher, in teaching the doctrine of living perfect, by adopting their ideas of the *law;* yet nevertheless, the *true law would frequently be held up before me*, and was applied to my heart by the Spirit of God, so that I could but see that I did not live a life of perfect holiness, but that my heart was inconstant as the wind, and desperately wicked in wandering from God. This eventually drove me out of my Arminianism, as I shall show in the next Chapter, and caused me to see, as I have stated in a former publication, that the very end of it is death; that is, that there is not *power* enough in it to

save a single soul. And if the sentiments of Arminians were true, not a single soul would ever reach heaven. Of this I feel a confidence of convincing the reader, if he will be candid, and read without prejudice; but if not—if he reads with his mind shut up to conviction, with his bounds already set, determined never to move, right or wrong, nor to renounce a sentiment in favour of which he has become prepossessed, however clearly truth may declare against it: I say, if thus he reads, my labour in writing and his in reading, will be, so far as respects *him*, utterly in vain. How many, however, are there, that thus read and converse, and who, at the same time, will profess candour, and to be open to conviction? You say, perhaps, reader, you are not of that class; for it is beneath the dignity of a man *of the world*, much more of a Christian. Are you *sure* that your heart does not deceive you? Come, let me try you—follow me through the narrative, and ask your own conscience, at the conclusion, whether you have shut up your mind to the light of truth or not; and if you do, you stand *self-condemned*, and to be sure God is greater and knoweth all things.

CHAPTER VII.

More and dreadful trials, and fearful apprehensions of having fallen away beyond the reach of mercy—resulted in being convinced that the doctrine of falling from grace was not a bible doctrine—&c. &c.

The next morning after the evening last mentioned in the foregoing Chapter, I walked out, viewing the works of creation and beholding the glory of God in all his works and ways. God seemed *present* every where. I seemed to possess a faith that greatly surprised me—indeed it appeared to me let me ask what I would it would be granted, even if it were to the

plucking up trees by the roots. I felt such strong faith that it actually seemed to frighten me. But when I prayed to God, about all which I could *say* was "*thy will be done.*" Instead of asking for particular things, I went about for two or three days with this cry continually in my soul, "*thy will be done.*" O what a sweet reconciliation to his will, I felt through my *whole soul.* I had not the least desire to alter any thing which God had ever done or was doing. I rejoiced in his government of the moral and natural world with unspeakable joy—having no disposition to dictate any circumstance or event in respect to myself or any being or thing in the universe. It was not possible for me *feeling as I then did*, to ask any thing contrary to the will of God, for I felt swallowed up in the divine will like a drop of water lost in the ocean.

I proceeded towards home praising and blessing God. I made a call a few minutes in Providence, where I had an opportunity of seeing the corpse of a person who died the night before. What a glorious victory over all fear of death I then enjoyed! Death was a most delightful theme, and the grave a quiet resting place in my view. It was but a few days however, before I began to feel most fearful apprehensions of *falling away*, for according to my system, if I did not continue to *live perfectly holy*, there was no hope of my finally getting to heaven, notwithstanding the great things which God had done for me!

I determined therefore, if possible to be at any time ready to die by living without sin. My health was precarious. I knew I was liable to die suddenly, and according to my sentiments if I were to cease to love God with all my heart, *one minute*, I was liable to die in that instant, without repentance, and be forever shut out of heaven; for most certainly *not loving God with all the heart is a transgression of the law, or sin*—and to be sure sin will damn a soul to all eternity if not repented of and forgiveness obtained, through Jesus Christ, and according to my system there was *no promise* that if I did sin I should be brought to *repentance*

and forgiven for Christ's sake; so that there was no possible way for me to have any kind of *reasonable* hope of heaven, except I loved God with all my heart *every moment*, and this is most certainly a legitimate consequence of Arminianism; and I firmly believe that God in infinite wisdom designed that I should try the whole length of my *idol system*, and thus bring me to acknowledge to my own self-abasement, that my salvation was of the Lord. My theoretical views of the law of God as "making *kind allowances* for all my "unavoidable weaknesses and *infirmities;* winking at "my *involuntary errors and short comings*,"* *&c.* served indeed in some small degree to keep me for a while from complete despair of reaching heaven in this way; yet notwithstanding all my speculative notions in this respect, the *true law* of God would sometimes find way to my mind, as I have before hinted, and fill me with horror by giving me a just view of my *own faithfulness* and the fallacy of my hopes on this ground. But I laboured most assiduously. About this time I removed to Pawtucket, engaged to teach the town school through the winter, besides which I preached and attended meetings almost every evening, not commencing them until about 8 o'clock, as the custom is in that place, which besides the extreme fatigue of teaching a school through the day of about one hundred scholars and then preaching in the evening, made it quite late before I could retire to rest. Under the weight of these labours the pillars of my feeble constitution trembled, but the tabernacle did not fall, and I continued in this course until the expiration of the term of the school in the spring when I relinquished school keeping, finding my health and strength fast failing me, and inadequate to the task any longer. But I still exerted every particle of my remaining strength in attending to what I conceived the duties of my calling in the gospel ministry. I preached at the time in the town school house, (there not having been at that

* Lumis on Holiness.

time any meeting-house erected) which was usually thronged and uncomfortably crowded, making it disagreeable and laborious for me to speak, which I expect contributed considerably to the decline of my health, and to debilitate again my nervous system. At any rate, by the middle of autumn I was reduced to a lower state of health, than what I had been for a considerable time past, and again sunk under the weight of my infirmities and extreme weakness of body. The spasms to which I had before been subject, seized me, and I apprehended myself again on the confines of eternity. But what next? Why, I had fallen away! I had come short of perfection, notwithstanding all my labours, and most certainly I was consistent with my Arminian sentiments in concluding that I had fallen away. I did not deduct, neither, all that part of my faithfulness that was excited, from fear of hell, but could see many *positive exercises* of heart that were *contrary* to holiness.

Now here I was, hopeless indeed; my case as I conceived, being far worse than before, because I had fallen from a very high state of grace, and the Arminians had always taught me to believe that such were the characters which the Apostle speaks of in the 6th of Hebrews, whom it was impossible to renew again to repentance. Hell with all its horrors seemed opened to my view, with the *very next thing* in my mind to a *positive certainty* that I should in a very few minutes *be there*, shut up to go no more out forever!! Although I was so out of health and so extremely weak, that if it had not been for the horror of my mind, I should not have thought myself scarcely able to keep from my bed, yet I frequently flew from the house in the night and resorted to the fields and groves, where I sometimes bemoaned my case as beyond the reach of mercy, completely enveloped in the mists and clouds of hopeless despair.

One thing for which at this time I felt condemned, and which I thought had sealed my doom, was the idolatrous attachment which I had entertained to the

Free Will Baptist denomination. I had indeed idolized them; yet my poor inconstant heart so deceived me, that I was not aware of it at the time. I had during the year prepared the memoirs of my life and experience for the press, to which I intended to add a dialogue which I had written, illustrative of my doctrinal views. The dialogue personated a Free Will Baptist, Methodist and Calvinist, and in it I exalted the Free Will Baptist to the highest round on the ladder of sectarian fame, taking good care to give him the preference in all things to the Methodist, yet at the same time using a great deal of tenderness with the Methodist, commending him in *most things*, and leaving him but a degree below the Free Will Baptist. But as for the Calvinist, I put him below the dirt of the feet of both of them, thinking I was doing God service in bending all my forces against him, to hold him up to the scorn and contempt of all *reasonable* and scriptural Christians! I seized this manuscript and consigned it to that place most fit for such kind of productions, viz. the devouring flames. Although I had not at that time the most distant idea that the Arminian sentiments which the dialogue advocated were false, yet I felt convicted as I have before observed, of having possessed *partial attachment* to the Free Will Baptists, and that the dialogue was fraught with this undue attachment and partiality, not only to the prejudice of the poor Calvinist, but also of the Methodist, in that I gave the Free Will Baptist the pre-eminence. How many are blinded in this way, and are crying up liberty, when they are complete slaves to prejudice for their own party, even to the shutting their eyes against light and stopping their ears to the calls of justice, God only knows. Selfishness may be nourished in this way as well as any other. I know it was by me. No man perhaps ever thought more highly of a denomination than I did of the Free Will Baptists. I was satisfied indeed that there were Christians in other denominations, but some how or other, I looked on the Free Will Baptists as a *superior class* of Christians.

I was delighted exceedingly to hear that any were leaving other denominations and joining with them; and their accounts of revivals seemed *rather more delicious* to me than accounts of revivals among other denominations. I was particularly delighted, when I read the accounts which were frequently published by them of bringing over churches and parts of churches of the Calvinistic Baptists and Congregationalists, to their faith, and inducing them to leave their *state of bondage* for gospel liberty. As I conceived them the only denomination that were "free" but the "*Christians*," (and them I considered rather *too free*) so I was greatly *enslaved*, by strong prejudice *for them* and *against others* on this account. And as I considered them by far the *most humble* people, so I was *very proud* of their humility! O the deceitfulness of the human heart! Of the deceitfulness of mine in this respect, I was now partially convinced.

But to return—eternal misery and banishment from the presence of God, were subjects now continually before me, and with dreadful anticipations of my final doom, I traversed in my mind the dark gloomy prison, amid rattling chains, and despairing groans and devouring flames, where hope nor mercy can never come to a long eternity!!—I know not that I indulged in murmuring against God in the least, yet the thought of being eternally banished from his presence, was inconceivably dreadful. The language of the poet I could feelingly adopt.

"What, to be *banished* from my life,
"And yet forbid to die!
"To linger in eternal pain,
"Yet death forever fly?

"Oh! wretched state of deep despair
"To see my God remove,
"And fix my doleful station where
I must not taste his love!"

Notwithstanding these apprehensions, this state of despair in respect to the salvation of my soul, yet I

have since clearly seen, that I enjoyed *at the very time*, holiness of heart; and perhaps as constantly as ever I had done in the course of my religious experience. I loved God; and holiness looked to me infinitely desirable, on account of its intrinsic excellence, and I admired the image of God wherever I saw it. I felt an inexpressible anxiety for the welfare of others, and was ardently solicitous to "do good unto all men, especially the household of faith." My heart clung to those whom I considered to be the humble followers of Christ, and the thoughts of being eternally separated from those who appeared to me so lovely, was like ten thousand fiery darts in my wretched soul. I felt tender hearted, affectionate and benevolent towards the worst of men, and perhaps never possessed more evangelical humility.

But I had fallen short of *sinless perfection*, and I knew that it was written, "cursed is he who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." A single sinful thought spoiled my hope of heaven; for I believed in the possibility of falling from grace, and I knew that nothing but sin would damn an immortal soul, and I knew that sin was a transgression of the law, and when the spirit of God set home the law, it would be the *true law*, which required me to love God with all my heart, without making *any allowance* for those sins which my Arminian theology taught me, that the law of God, under which Christians were placed, did make allowances for. Thus God taught me that this notion of the law was false. And how could I now maintain any hope of heaven—can any man under heaven tell me, except it were by living a life of sinless perfection? For admitting that in the morning I might be assured that my sins were all forgiven, yet long before evening I might have unholy exercises, and so transgress the law again, and then I might consistently with my sentiments die and go directly down to hell. This is more than the Arminians sometimes say, a man may be a saint to day, and a devil and damned to-morrow—it is a saint now, and

perhaps, in less than one hour, a devil and lost forever! for, Christian reader, I ask you if your experience does not bear witness that you have frequently felt the witness of the spirit that you were a child of God, felt comfortable and happy in your mind, yet in less than one hour you have felt unholy exercises, or your heart wandering from God, yea, perhaps you in less time than that, have neglected or refused to do some known positive duty. You may have entered the house of God, with an assurance that you were a Christian, and before you left it you may have felt it your duty to bear testimony to the truth of religion before the world, but refused to bear the cross. And now have you not fallen away, if the doctrine of falling from grace be true? Yea, and perhaps in less than an hour too! Have you not sinned? And if so, what secures you from hell? You say there is no promise in the covenant of grace, that you shall ever be brought to repentance, and obtain forgiveness of your sin, and now how do you know but what you have sealed your damnation? Now this was the way which I argued and reasoned with myself, and I contend (and no reasonable man can deny it) that I was consistent with my sentiments, and I could not possibly come to any other conclusion, without making sin a very *light, trifling thing*, that does not justly expose him who commits it to eternal misery—and what would this be but awful blasphemy? And yet do not the advocates of the falling plan contend that this is true, most strenuously; and at the same time acknowledge that they sin against God daily, and yet all the while maintain a hope of heaven? How is this? In the name of common sense, I ask how is this done but by doing away the law of God, and making out sin to be nothing. But hear this—*heaven and earth shall pass away, but the holy law of God never shall pass away, nor shall, nor can it be altered, nor taken away, and a milder one substituted in the place of it.* Seeing this, and trying myself by it, how could I maintain a hope? I could not; but was overwhelmed in despair. My health was such that I con-

sidered it probable that I should very suddenly be removed into eternity, the natural consequence of which was to keep me almost constantly engaged in self-examination. I drew the darkest conclusions respecting my state—when I read of Saul, king of Israel, I conceived myself to be, like him, rejected of the Lord! and in short, all the hopeless cases I read of in the scriptures, or had heard of, like Spira and others who died in despair, I imagined similar to my own, and concluded that my last end would surely be like theirs.

I had a great anxiety to see some Methodist friends in Boston, and although my health was extremely bad, as I have before remarked, that had it not been for the anxiety of my mind, I shouldnot have thought myself able to keep from my bed, yet I precipitately left the house, and took passage in the stage for Boston. A wounded spirit who can bear! I had but little hope that I should live to see the place of my destination, and I was confidently persuaded that if I died on the passage, I should drop directly into the burning lake! O my God, thou alone canst tell what sensations of soul I then realized. The terrors of hell took such hold of me that I frequently felt as if I must leave the stage, and fly I knew not where. But O, the curse of the law; if I had taken the wings of the morning and flown to the uttermost ends of the earth, I could not have escaped it, according to the views that I then entertained; for I had fallen away by coming short of sinless perfection. I thought (for the most of the time) that my doom was fixed, unalterably fixed; yet now and then I had transient interventions of hope, that I was not beyond the reach of mercy. I know not how to express my feelings. My mind, *comparatively* speaking, felt like a person completely shut up in a tight cask, without any possible means of extrication, doomed to remain there forever. I seemed to understand well by my then present experience, the following language of Jeremiah. "He hath led me and brought me into darkness but not into light." "Surely against me is he turned: he turneth his hand against

me all the day. My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath broken my bones. He hath builded against me, and compassed me with gall and travel. He hath set me in dark places as they that be dead of old. He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy. Also when I cry and shout he shutteth out my prayer. He hath enclosed my ways with hewn stone, he hath made my path crooked." Lam. xxvi. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

We did not arrive in Boston until dark, which together with the horrible darkness of my mind, and being an utter stranger in the place, and added to this, my miserable health, rendered me an object of commiseration to any who could have known my state and feelings. I wandered about for some time before I found the residence of those whom I had come to see, but at length found the house, and was received with apparent affectionate tenderness and Christian kindness. I soon unbosomed, as I conceived, my wretched state—telling them at the same time, how sure I had been that my name was written in heaven—that God but about a year before had worked wonders for me, and given me to see his glory. They encouraged me that my name was in heaven still, and that I had not fallen away beyond the reach of mercy. (Query. How did they know this?) This was a dark and doleful night to me, never to be forgotten. I wrote a letter to send by the mail the next morning to my family, but felt almost like one speaking from the dark domains of hell to their surviving earthly friends. After taking some refreshment I retired to bed, but not to rest or sleep, but to bemoan my situation.

The next evening, I think it was, I had clear views of holy exercises of heart and assurances that I *was yet* a sheep of Christ, but notwithstanding this, in a few hours I felt again as wretched as ever; for I so narrowly watched my heart, and the thoughts thereof, that I soon saw that I had fallen away again! Eternity! O, how eternity then appeared to me. I could not contain myself but, arose from my bed and called

up some of my Christian friends to see if they could yet give me a word of comfort, or if there might yet be the least possible chance for me to escape the prison of long and dark despair—some of them were almost out of patience with me, but others dealt very tenderly. In this state I continued for about four days, often, as I have before observed, seeing grace in my heart, or being assured that I had holy exercises of heart and then filled with unspeakable horror from the idea that I had fallen away.

The reader will observe that I was now *trying my system*. I think I can now plainly see the wisdom of God in thus dealing with me. I had been greedy of Arminianism, and he determined to let me have enough of it. I tried my faithfulness constantly and scripturally too, not by my external walk, and thus considering myself faithful if I did not commit outward acts of sin, or neglect from positive external duty, but by examining my heart. And this is the way God tries us—he searches the heart, and "looks at the heart."

My friends at home feeling a deep concern about me, my brother came down to see me, and I returned with him. On my return home I was alternately hoping and despairing. I was welcomed by my friends and brethren with many words of comfort and encouragement, and at times, sensibly realized the presence of God, and holiness of heart, and at other times was filled with consternation and horror. The state of my health kept me in constant apprehensions of death, and the worth of the immortal soul was solemnly and almost constantly exhibited to my view. Some of the meetings which I attended about this time, were to me extraordinary, on account of the nearness which I felt in my heart to God, and of his holy presence filling the house; and I could say that I knew that I was a Christian; yet in perhaps less than an hour I should conceive that I had sealed my damnation; and would conceive myself almost a devil incarnate—and likened myself to Judas Iscariot, Francis Spira, or

some other finally impenitent and incorrigible reprobates. I used to awake in the night so filled with the horrors of despair, that I would leave my bed and proceed to the houses of some of the brethren to see if I could find a word of comfort. I almost continually saw in anticipation the bottomless pit before me, and meditated on the millions and millions of years that I must dwell in the devouring flames and everlasting burnings!! Yet all this time I felt a tender, loving and forgiving spirit, and admired God, holiness and real Christians; nor do I remember that I ever in the least murmured against God, as dealing *unjustly* with me, even if hell must be my doom. I understood, by experience, what Paul says about the *fiery darts* of the devil. When I entered the pulpit, (as I did when I had bodily strength sufficient) I thought it probable that I should die while preaching, and go down to dwell with apostate angels forever. I knew not what *to do*;—indeed I failed. There was no heaven for me. If I had the evidence that I was a Christian in the morning, I *fell away* before night. But O, to give up to be *damned* to all eternity! to be banished from God and saints, who were in my view lovely and dear to my heart—although, as I before observed, if this must be my lot, I did not feel like murmuring, or hating God on the account of it; yet the thought was dreadful, dreadful beyond all description. But here I was—I had *gone through* with my system. *My* faithfulness had failed. I saw it;—yet I saw no remedy, for I had been taught to look on the doctrine of the saint's perseverance, as one of the horns of the "*hydra-headed monster Calvinism*," and if I never had committed the unpardonable sin *before*, I should certainly involve myself in that dreadful dilemma, if I *looked* upon it with the least degree of *complacency*.

As I was riding over to Cranston, in company with one of my Christian friends, he in the course of conversation which passed between us, mentioned the words of St. Paul. Col. iv. 3, 4. "Ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God." "When Christ

who is our life shall appear, ye shall also appear with him in glory." For a moment I think I saw a glimmering of light reflected by evangelical truth, in the view which I had of this passage. But prejudice, and the fear of *receiving error* almost instantly closed my eyes, and if I had never been in the situation myself, I should hardly believe it possible for a Christian to read this passage, and not readily admit that if it be the word of God, it is precisely as impossible for a true believer to fall away, as it *is for Christ*, who has entered into the presence of God, and is there hidden from the storms and powers of hell; for surely if there were not another passage in the bible, yet this is sufficient to demonstrate that the doctrine of final perseverance is a "bible truth."

But so thick was the film of prejudice over my eyes, in consequence of the frightful pictures which from my childhood had been continually presented to my mind, by the old Six Principle Baptists, Free Will Baptists and Methodists, against every idea which might be considered as nearly related to what they called "Calvinism," as the ninety-ninth cousin, that I know, and am sure that nothing short of the *determination* of the ever blessed God to convince me to my shame and confusion of face, that I was wrong, would ever have moved me. Indeed, no one ever attempted it through all my trials. My Christian friends were almost all of them Arminians, and those who were not, thought not of undertaking to convince *me*, for they considered it *useless*, or labour in vain. Neither did I read books that were in opposition to my Arminianism, *for fear of being poisoned*, but held on upon Wesley and Fletcher, and writers of the same stamp, until God shewed me by putting me to the proof of my own faithfulness, and his plain, unadulterated word that my sentiments were false.

I tarried a few days at Cranston, in much the same frame of mind which I had been in for some time past, trying in vain to draw water from *dry wells*, instead of the wells of salvation. I returned home, and some-

times I thought of trying some expedient, like travelling and preaching, to see if *that* would not help me; and then again I knew I had already laboured beyond my natural strength, or what my constitution would bear, and a considerable part of the time was unable to preach at home, much more to travel extensively.

My "bones were" daily "broken," and I was "compassed about with gall and travel." O how gladly would I have forsaken every earthly comfort, and roamed in the solitary wilderness all the days of my life, if it would have given me peace!! I continually saw imperfections in my life, and as to reaching heaven, it looked to me like an idle dream, for I fell away every day, yea, many times in a day. Thus "my ways were inclosed with hewn stone." Nevertheless, when I was able to preach, I preached the Arminian system "clear out," so great was my blindness and stupidity, together with the fear of risking my salvation *wholly* on the promise of God. I must keep the foundation on *my shoulder*, or else the building would go to wreck. But I worked myself out of stock again and again; and yet the building was not completed—nay farther from it than before I ever began, for I frequently thought if I had *never* said any thing about religion, there might be (and this indeed was as foolish as all the rest) some chance for me.

In this state, tossed by the tempest, I continued the principal part of the winter. One day, while riding to Cranston, in company with my father, these words rushed into my mind; Heb. vi. 18: "*That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us:*"—I almost spake aloud—if this be true, it is impossible for a soul who *has fled* to Christ, to be damned; but I have fled to Christ, and therefore it is impossible for me to be lost, inasmuch as it is impossible for God to lie. It is the *immutable promise* of God, that he will bring me to heaven. Here I think (notwithstanding in a few moments I started back for fear of dangerous ground as I had

always been in a habit of believing it would sink under me,) I say here was the first step that ever I took in travelling that road of doctrinal truth, which I now see plainly to be marked out by the word of God as being the truth revealed from heaven for the salvation and comfort of lost and miserable sinners.

Here I seemed to get a glance at the nature of the *promise of God*, that is, that *we* do not make the promise of God stand in respect to us, by *our faithfulness*, but that the promise *keeps us faithful*. Not but what this passage of scripture might, perhaps, be more plausibly argued against, as not proving the doctrine of the saint's perseverance, than many others, yet it pleased God to thus apply it to my heart. The truth was, I had sailed on board the old leaky ship, until every plank was gone, and then I was *thrown on the rock!* the immutable promise of God—forever blessed be his name. But, as I observed, I started back; for notwithstanding all the light and evidence which rushed upon my mind, yet I was afraid of the "*horns of the beast*," and would wishfully look away, after the wreck of my system, to see if I could make it hold me up until I crossed the ocean—for I was yet afraid to *trust God* with the great concern in any other way, than, as the Arminians say, *by his assisting me*. But whenever I began to look back, I felt like perishing on the plain. Not many days after this, a person mentioned this passage of scripture in my hearing, which opened to my mind, altogether differently from what it ever looked before.

John, xv. 2.—"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." I had always conceived that this passage was a principal one in proof of the falling plan, but I was surprised to see that it proved the opposite doctrine completely. Every branch that beareth fruit, it is declared, is purged, that it may bring forth more. Here then is a positive declaration, that every *Christian* shall be purged, for surely every Christian bears

some fruit; nor can a person possibly be a Christian, without bearing fruit. Those branches therefore, which never bore fruit, could not have been Christians without we contend that a person may be a Christian, without loving God, and that to be sure, would be odd enough. I was surprised at my folly, in construing this passage as I had, and the true meaning of it afforded me comfort; for I was very confident that I had borne fruit, or from time to time loved God. I was satisfied that the branches which bore no fruit were only *nominally* or *professionally* in Christ, like Judas Iscariot, and others of the same character; for those that are in Christ Jesus *savingly*, must most certainly bear fruit at the time they are born again—but these branches bear not fruit. I moved softly another step, and began to think that I might venture *to look* at the other passages which I had considered, warranted the belief in falling from grace. This I did most carefully and studiously, and was brought to this conclusion;—what conclusion? Why, that there was not one single passage in all the word of God, declaring that a true believer ever did or ever will fall away—this I have shewn in my work, on the Perseverance of the Saints; and in the name of truth, I challenge all the Arminians in christendom to shew to the contrary. Some that I had considered very strong in favour of the falling plan, I found to be so manifestly destitute of the least shade of proof for that system, that I was ashamed, and actually astonished at the prejudice and stupidity of any man, in thus applying them—especially II Peter, ii ch. 20, 21, 22. In order to make this appear plain to the reader, I will here transcribe a few remarks on this passage, from my work on the Perseverance of the Saints.

"I wish the reader, however conversant he may have been with his bible, and with this chapter, would now turn to it and read the whole deliberately, and answer his conscience and God, if there be aught in this chapter, proving that the persons here spoken of were ever true Christians. No! But altogether to the contrary.

The apostle in the last verse plainly tells us so, if there be any meaning in it at all.

"It is happened unto them (he says) according to the true proverb. And what is that true proverb? Why the dog is returned to his vomit again, and the *sow* that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire. Now the dog after he has vomited is *still a dog;* and the sow after her *external washing*, is still a *swine.* The one's vomiting and the other's washing, never made them sheep! And so says our Apostle, it is with those of whom he is speaking. But yet our brethren, in order to hold up the old rotten building, have made the Apostle to bring forward hogs and dogs to represent the character of a Christian! From such symbols and metaphors, good Lord deliver us. Christ never told Peter to feed his dogs. Reader, how dare you ever pretend that this chapter will bear the exposition that the advocates for the falling plan have given it. It looks to me almost like blasphemy. God save me from ever comparing a Christian to a dog or swine.—Yet our opponents must, in their sense of the place; for observe, they contend that the vomiting and washing signifies true conversion; yet the dog after he has vomited is still a dog with the same nature, and so also the sow after being washed, *is still* a sow with the same *swinish nature;* and these, our brethren think are fit emblems of the saints of God! O shame, where is thy blush; compare the people of God to swine, when the Jews would sooner suffer martyrdom than eat a piece of swine, they considered them so unclean. No character, says Dr. Clarke, could be meaner in the sight of a Jew, than that of a *swine-herd.* And now does it look likely that Peter, who was a Jew, would take a swine to typify a truly regenerated and converted soul? One would think that such downright nonsense had never escaped the mouth nor pen of any man of common sense or religion. But such is the strength of prejudice and attachment to particular creeds and notions among sectarians, that this *has* been done.—Nothing need be plainer than that the apostle is here

speaking of persons who, notwithstanding they had *externally* been cleansed from the pollutions of the world by their fears of hell, convictions, &c.; yet were possessed of the same old nature still. Put a sheep into the mire and they do not wallow in it with delight, but are most uncomfortable until cleansed; whereas, wash a swine and they will quickly return to the mire again! But does this external reformation, says one, convey that knowledge of Christ to the soul, which is eternal life? I answer no; nor is it pretended by the Apostle that these persons whom he compares to dogs and swine, had that knowledge of God which is eternal life. There is a knowledge of God which is not eternal life, or else the bible is not true. "*For when they knew God, they glorified him not as God.*" If they had that knowledge of God which is eternal life, "they could not perish, unless they could be lost, and still have eternal life," and that I should think as much of a paradox as to say that a dog or swine is a proper emblem of a good Christian."

I saw clearly that the best scripture proof which the advocates for the falling plan were able to produce, were hypothetical passages like that of St. Paul. "But I keep my body under, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast away." I saw that these passages no more proved the *moral* possibility of the saints falling from grace, than these words of Christ to the Jews—John, viii ch. 55—"*If* I should say I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you," proved the moral possibility of our blessed Lord's becoming a *liar* by denying that he knew his Father, or the possibility of finding fifty or forty, &c. righteous persons in Sodom, when God said, "*If* there be so many found there, he would save the cities—or the possibility of being justified and saved by the law, because Paul says, "the law is not of faith; but the man that doeth them shall live in them." Or the possibility of a holy angel's coming from heaven and preaching a false doctrine, because Paul says, "though we or an angel from heav-

en preach any other gospel, let him be accursed. Now I knew it was *morally* impossible for Christ to become a liar; and I knew it was utterly impossible to find fifty &c. righteous persons in Sodom, at the time referred to above; and yet I could but see that any one might with as much propriety insist on the possibility of these things, from the form of speech, which was applied to them, as to insist on the *moral* possibility of the saints finally perishing from exactly the *same kind* of expressions. If the *expressions* would prove the *one*, they must of course prove the *other*—and who will pretend to deny it? I also saw that this mode of speaking was adopted for the sake of illustrating some important subject or thing. As in Ezekiel, where it is said "but when the righteous man turneth away," &c. &c. the Prophet evidently uses these hypothetical expressions to illustrate the equity and justice of God's dealings with them. They had this proverb among them, that the fathers had eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth were set on edge—that the ways of God were not equal—God rebukes them for this proverb, shows them that they have no occasion for it; and declares to them that the soul that sins shall die. And in order to illustrate and demonstrate the equity and justice of his dealings with mankind, he makes the supposition above alluded to. So when God told Abraham if he found fifty righteous persons, &c. (making the supposition five times) in the cities, he would spare the whole, was to illustrate his goodness, justice and mercy to his children. But these expressions by no means proved that it was *possible* to find these righteous persons in the cities of Sodom and Gormorah. And as for the expression of Paul, "I keep my body under," &c. we have precisely the same kind of a speech of his, on another subject, where the thing supposed, we must admit, was *morally* impossible, as it respected its taking place.

I will transcribe the remarks which are made on this text, from my work on the saints' perseverance, for a further illustration of this subject.

"We are referred to 1 Cor. 9th chap. 27, as affording a proof of the doctrine of falling from grace."

"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection lest by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."

Now *I* think this passage proves the doctrine of the saints' perseverance. Paul was a Christian, he therefore kept his body under. He did *not* run uncertainly —he did *not* fight as one who beateth the air, as he observes in the context, but he kept his body under. If he had not kept his body under, he would have been a cast-away—this we admit. But that the passage proves the *moral* possibility of the saints' perishing. we deny. The passage is of the same nature with many which have already been considered. Let those who urge such passages as proof against the final perseverance of the saints, attend to the following:—

When Paul was on his passage to Rome, a tempest arose, which seemed to threaten the vessel and crew with destruction. Observe, Acts 27th chap. 20.— "And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was taken away."

It appears by the account, Paul fasted for a long time, and was also eventually assured by God himself, that they should not be lost—observe what he says to his company—

"*And now I exhort you to be of good cheer, for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.*

"For there stood by me this night the angel of God whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, "Fear not, Paul, thou must be brought before Cesar—and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee."

"Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer, for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me."

"Now, any person may see, that in the foregoing it was positively declared by God himself, to Paul, that he should be brought before Cesar, and that the lives of all who were with him should be preserved, and

that it was *morally* impossible for this not to take place if God be *true* to his word, for there cannot be a more positive assurance of any future thing coming to pass in all the word of God, than that all their lives should be saved. But let us hear what Paul says to them, as some of them were about to flee out of the ship, after they had let down the boat into the sea."

Verse 31. "Paul said unto the Centurion and to the soldiers: *Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.*"

"Here we have precisely the same kind of expression with this about Paul's keeping his body under *lest* he should be a cast-away. Does this prove that the word of God might fail, and Paul and all who were with him lost after the angel of the Lord had declared to the contrary? Or was this rather a *means* which God took into the account, in promising the *end*, and was therefore made conducive to the final *accomplishment* of the end? I should suppose men who feared giving God the lie, would answer that the latter is the truth, and so also with reference to Paul's keeping his body under, lest he should become a cast-away."

Thus I found that there was not a text within the covers of the bible, that could be produced to prove the precious Arminian doctrine which I had advocated so strenuously.* And is this possible? Yes, it is, let who will deny it.

But now for the other system. Could I find any proof in the sacred word of God, that, *that* was true? Yes; for no sooner did I glance at the pages of Holy writ, in my *right mind;* I mean without prejudice, or rather without determining *not to see* any such proof, if there *was any;* than I found the bible was full of it! And what had I been about for ten or twelve years? Why, giving Christ the lie, direct!!!

* I can as positively prove from scripture, that it is our duty to worship the Devil, as Arminians can prove the doctrine of falling from grace. Take I. Kings, xviii. 21. "And Elijah came unto all the people and said, how long halt ye between two opinions? *If* the Lord be God, follow him; but *if* Baal, then follow him."

I saw now that if there were not another passage in all the bible—yet the one recorded in the x. chap. of John, 27th and 28th verses, was enough, (if it is admitted to be the words of Christ,) sufficiently to prove the doctrine of the infallible final perseverance of every believer. "*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.*"

I saw clearly that if this language of our Saviour did not prove that those who are *now* the sheep of Christ, should infallibly be saved, or should not be lost in hell, then there were no declarations; no not a solitary passage in all the bible which proved that they might not be lost, or fall away and perish after they get to heaven. And reader I call upon you to show me any stronger proof of the latter than these texts are, of the former. I assert that it cannot be done, and this too, without fear of contradiction.—This I mentioned about this time to a Free Will Baptist preacher, and he frankly owned that he did not consider there was any proof that the saints might not fall away, after they had arrived to heaven!!!!!!! This was carrying the system *rather* beyond the limits which I had been in a habit of prescribing. You may start, reader, at this man's expression, as blasphemous, but if you advocate that the sheep of Christ will perish everlastingly *after* Christ has given them *eternal life*, and declared that they never should perish, what hinders you from being guilty of the same charge. He but contradicted the word of God, and *you* do no less; ☞and you cannot deny it. The cavils of Arminians to "get over" these plain passages, appeared* *now* to me profoundly foolish. I will

* It is worthy of remark, that the Arminians urge the expression of Christ, in respect to the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost, as incontestable proof, that those who are guilty of it, must inevitably be damned, in opposition to the sentiments of Universalists. Why do they do this? Why do they produce this passage? "But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven

here again transcribe a few remarks on these passages, from my work on the Perseverance of the Saints, which will shew how the cavils and objections of Arminians then appeared to me, and were answered in my mind.

"Now it appears to me that the above passages prove the infallible salvation of every saint, or sheep of Christ, as clearly and positively as anything can be proved, and if there were not another passage in the bible expressly declaring the thing, ought we not to receive Christ's own words as decisive? or shall we rather look him in the face and give him the lie, by asserting that we do not believe what he has spoken? Now observe, every person who is born again becomes a sheep of Christ; none I think will deny this. Well, Christ says that he gives—understand, he says in the *present tense*, I give to them eternal life. He does not say that he will at some future day give them eternal life—but I *give them*—that is, now. I ask the reader if he can find an end to eternal life? If so, why may we not expect to perish after we get to heaven? There is nothing more said of the saints at the resurrection, to secure them from perishing, than is here said. Is there anything more?—or can there be anything more said? Christ says here, I *give them eternal life;* and again, they *shall never perish.*—Now I call on our opponents to shew me any *stronger* language to prove the impossibility of the saints' falling from glory, than these passages which I have quoted to prove the impossibility of the saints' falling from glory, than these passages which I have quoted to prove the im-

him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come," as irrefragable evidence that Universalism is not true? Because you say Christ positively affirms, that those who do blaspheme the Holy Ghost, can never be forgiven; of course, can never be saved.—But does he affirm this more fully and plainly, than he does that his sheep shall never perish? I leave the reader to compare the passages, and judge which appears most full and explicit; and then judge why the Arminians should contend that Christ means as he says, in one passage.

possibility of their finally falling away before they get there? And I would ask the candid reader what language *could* our Saviour have used, which would have more clearly and conclusively confuted their notions of the saints' perishing everlastingly.—Our opponents say that the saints may and undoubtedly many of them do perish. What! is this possible, that a man with his bible in his hand and his eye fixed on the word of the Lord Jesus Christ, where he says they shall never perish? The turns and twists (if I may use the vulgar expression) which our opponents have made in order to get clear of these plain words of Christ, is really an imposition on common sense, and more especially on scripture sense. This eternal life, they say, is the love of God, in the heart—so they may lose the love of God, out of their hearts, and so lose eternal life! Well, if this be correct, the saints may die after they get to heaven. It's a poor rule that will not work both ways —for there is nothing more promised to the saints than eternal life, which is supposed to include all the blessedness of heaven. Now according to this curious turn, eternal life has no connexion with the *saint's existence* and *enjoyment* of God in his soul—the love of God in *itself considered*, is all the eternal life which there is, and as for the *creature's enjoyment* of this love—*his happiness—his joy—his peace—his transporting views of God—these* are all entirely disconnected with eternal life! Now we as readily admit as they do, that the saint would not enjoy himself without the love of God. But, observe, this promise is decisive, and never can be overthrown, that they *shall* enjoy this, and that, too, to all eternity. I ask the unprejudiced reader what idea strikes his mind when he thinks of eternal life? Does he not consider that happiness or the creature's enjoyment, and that too without end, is inseparably connected with it? And what would he think for any one to tell him, that, although the great God might give him eternal life beyond the grave, yet he might lose it! And that, too, after it was given to him—for if it may be lost by one unto whom it is given,

why not by another? But Christ says, I *give unto them* eternal life. Shew unto me, therefore, a new-born soul, and I will shew you one unto whom Christ has given eternal life. And that heavenly enjoyment has already begun in their souls, and although they will not enjoy the *full fruition* of happiness in this world which they will in heaven, yet the gift is made—the inheritance is sure—the will is sealed, and that too by the BLOOD OF THE TESTATOR, and an earnest of the inheritance is already given.

Our opponents say—but they are not sheep any longer than they *continue* to follow; so if they do not continue to follow, they may perish, consistently with this promise. Well they *were* sheep, I suppose they will acknowledge; (because if they were not, it will do to rank them with those spoken of by Peter, which our opponents think fell away, but which Peter, in their best estate, compares to *swine and dogs*.) But they *were* true sheep, and at that time Christ gave them eternal life; but after following the Lord six months or a year, they stopped or fell away, and so here is an end of eternal life! Worse and worse. Now the true state of the case is, that this promise that they shall never perish, and this gift of eternal life *secures their continuance* in following Christ, and this is the *reason why* they do endure to the end.

Dr. Clarke says, "will any man attempt to say that he who does not endure to the end, and is unfaithful, shall enter into life?" Answer, no. We say no such thing; other people misrepresent us, and say this of our sentiments—but they must answer to God for it. We say the saints *will* persevere in holiness and endure to the end, and the good reason we have to think so is because God has given them eternal life, and has promised they shall never perish. But to turn away finally, would be to perish; so, therefore, the very promise that they shall not perish, includes that they shall not cease finally to follow Christ; and moreover, here comes in another plain promise, expressly declaring the very thing.

Jeremiah xxxii. 40.—"*And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they* SHALL NOT DEPART FROM ME."

Finally, I was more and more astonished at my former stupidity; or rather, the blinding prejudice which I was so long a slave to, when I came to read with my *eyes open*, such passages as the following, and many more, which I forbear to transcribe:

John v. 24.—"Verily, verily, I say unto yon, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, *hath everlasting life, and shall not come unto condemnation*, but is passed from death unto life."—(Observe, the moment a soul believeth in Christ, he HATH EVERLASTING LIFE.)

Romans, x. 8, 9. "That is the word of faith which we preach. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and *shalt believe in thy heart, that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*"

John, vi. 47. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, *hath everlasting life.*" Again, verse 54. "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, *hath eternal life*, and I will raise him up at the last day." Verse 58. "He that eateth this bread shall live forever."

Job, xvii. 9. "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall grow stronger and stronger.

Psalms, xxxvii. 23, 24. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hands."

Col. iii. 3, 4. "For ye are dead, and your life *is hid with Christ in God.*"

"When Christ who is our life shall appear, ye shall also appear with him in glory."

Phil. i. 6. "Being confident of the very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (N. B. Paul believed in final perseverance—the Arminians

to "get over" this, say, God has begun a good work in all men!!!!!! If so, all are Christians—but this is a most anti-scriptural assertion. Man before regeneration has nothing good *in him*—grace knocks at the door—but this is not being in the house.)

Romans, viii. 31—39. "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

I. Cor. i. 8. "Who shall also *confirm you unto the end*, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I. Peter, i. 5. "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."

Time would fail me to transcribe all the passages of the same import of the above, which are to be found from one end of the bible to the other. And surely if the bible, by plain, direct and positive assertions, proves any thing, it proves the doctrine of falling from grace to be false, having no foundation in the scriptures—a man made thing, at open war with reason, incongruous with common sense, and inconsistent in the nature of things—for if the scriptures had not afforded a word of decisive proof on this subject either way, I was brought to see that if the Arminian notion of falling away was true, there was not the least probability of any soul's reaching heaven, except he happened to die the moment he was converted, or at some other moment when he had a gracious exercise. Thus I have shewn how I came to renounce the falling plan, and embrace the opposite system.—Not by arguments from any writer who had controverted the subject—but by trying *my faithfulness* or viewing it in that glass which God has set before us for that express purpose—by being convinced that I must inevitably perish if my former notions were true—and in this extremity, reading the scriptures

without prejudice, disregardless of the cry of Arminians, that the doctrine of the saints' perseverance was a "branch of Calvinism."

In the *first* place I believed in falling from grace, *because men told me it was truth*, and also by the truth's being misrepresented to me, and *misunderstood* by me. *Now* I renounced it because I had examined it *myself*—tried it *myself*—and found it for *myself*, to be false, in the way which I have stated. And now I ask the reader to disprove what I have stated, "*if he can.*"

I now began to read numerous writers, whom I had heretofore abhorred, with delight and satisfaction.—My Arminian friends warned me to beware, or I should get my mind entangled with the horrible heresy of those divines, being little aware that the work was already done, as I had kept my thoughts almost entirely to myself on the subject. I soon began, however, to mention the subject to my Christian friends, and advocate the doctrine of perseverance. They warned me that it was a branch of Calvinism, which constituted their principal argument. They said they did not know how it could be separated from election!!! I told them the question was, whether it was *true or not.* My eyes were more and more opened, to see what a state the minds of many were in, in respect to the everlasting truths of the gospel. I mourned, and felt most deeply humbled, that ever I had been an instrument of building up error, and misrepresenting truth. It looked to me worse than all the sins which I ever had committed in my life. I determined in future to try to search for truth; yea, to labour to know it as for a hidden treasure. I really *thirsted* for it, and was determined, if possible, to find it, however unpopular it might be in the view of professional Christians, or an ungodly world. As I had found one of the main pillars in my dearly beloved Arminian fabric, rotten, entirely rotten, so that I was obliged to condemn it and cast it away, I was now determined to examine the rest of the timber, and see for *myself*, (for I had

trusted others to inspect for me, to my sorrow,) what it was made of, who made it, &c. This I accordingly attended to, as I shall presently show, (after having given a brief account of my outward trials, from the time I dropped this part of the subject, up to the present,) and found to my astonishment that there was not only much rotten, good for nothing stuff, in the frame; but as it respected *foundation* timber, there was none of it at all—so that I had but *one side* of a house, notwithstanding I had always thought I lived in a beautiful palace. This I should have found out before, if old father Pharisee, (that great man,) had not stood in my light, and if *selfishness* had not held down my eye winkers so that I could not *look up* and see that God was a SOVEREIGN, AND HAD A RIGHT TO REIGN!

CHAPTER VIII.

Temporal affairs—Difficulties respecting Meeting House —Separation from Free Will Baptists, &c. &c.

I will now continue a brief relation of my external circumstances, from Chap. V, p. 102. The reader should be reminded, however, that in order to keep up a *distinct relation* of my internal exercises, and outward circumstances, I am obliged to insert them in *an order* in the present memoirs, not always precisely as they transpired. Thus in respect to most of the contents of this Chapter—the circumstances transpired *before* I became fully established in my present views of the doctrine of the saints' perseverance, as mentioned in the last Chapter. I did not become settled in this until some months *after* I left the Free Will Baptists. And at the time I experienced such extraordinary trials of mind, which in the last Chapter I have given a short account of, I was also harrassed with the difficulties which I am now about to allude

to." For my reasons for stating the following things, I refer the reader to the latter part of the Chapter.

I mentioned that on the 7th of October, "A number of brethren and sisters, in Pawtucket, most of whom had been converted through my instrumentality, covenanted together and were organized into a church, and I was unanimously chosen their pastor."

I have before mentioned that I had become quite interested to maintain what I considered the gospel plan of church government, which I have lately seen expressed in the following words, by another pen :—

"Since every church is formed by its own voluntary confederation, one church is neither superior, nor inferior to another in point of authority; but every church is entirely independent. There is no other necessary bond of union between individual churches, but brotherly love. This all churches ought to exercise towards one another. Any number of professing Christians may form themselves into a church by confederation, and exercise all ecclesiastical power among themselves, without any special connexion with, or dependence on any other church in the world. All ecclesiastical authority comes from Christ, and not from any particular church or churches. One church has as much power as another. All churches are sisters and stand upon a level. They may associate, or consociate for mutual advantage. But no church have a right to give up their power to an association, or consociation, or council, or any other ecclesiastical body. Churches have no right to unite for the purpose of concentrating and increasing their ecclesiastical authority. An association, or consociation, or council have no more power than any single church of which those bodies are composed. But it seems to be a very general opinion, that churches can concentrate and increase their power, by union. It is upon this principle of union, that a presbytery is supposed to have more power than a single church; that a synod has more power than a single presbytery; that the general assembly has more power than a single

synod ; and that the pope at the head of what is called the universal church has more power than all other ministers and churches in the world. If the premises are granted, these consequences must follow. If churches may concentrate and increase their power by union ; then an association may have more power than a single church ; a consociation may have more power than an association ; a synod may have more power than a presbytery ; a general assembly may have more power than a synod ; and the church universal, with his holiness at their head, may have more power than all other churches and all other clergymen in the world.* Congregationalists often complain of Presbyterians, Episcopalians and Papists, on account of their church government ; but they have no reason to complain ; for they act upon precisely the same principle, when they concentrate and increase their ecclesiastical power by union with associations, consociations and ecclesiastical councils. When any church gives up its independence to any other ecclesiastical body, it gives up all its power. But Christ has given no power to churches which they may give away."

Having this view of church government, I determined to have nothing to do, in constituting a church, if it were not founded on the aforementioned principles.—This I clearly stated to Mr. ****, who had appeared uncommonly zealous in encouraging me to preach in Pawtucket, and also that a church should be embodied. There was some talk that it would be expedient to have it considered a branch of the Cranston church. This I objected to, not because I entertained any dislike to that church, but because I disclaimed the principle involved. I talked this subject over and over again with Mr. ****. He seemed to be well pleased with the idea, and coincided with me in every respect, and so did Deacon ****, (this will appear in the judgment day.) We accordingly met,

* The writer of the above is a Congregationalist. Baptists hold to the same plan of church government.

and a church was constituted on the principles designated above. I will here give a copy of the constitution from the church record.

"*Book of Records of the Church of Christ, in Pawtucket, Massachusetts, commonly called Free Will Baptist; Constituted October 7th* 1820—*under the watch and care of Elder Ray Potter.*"

"On the evening of the 7th of October, 1820, a number of brethren and sisters, lately baptized by Elder Ray Potter, (whose names will be hereafter specified, together with Deacon Gardner Buffington, and his wife, Mary Buffington, and her daughter, Harriet Buffington—all of whom had formerly been members of the church of Christ, in Swanzey, Mass. Also, brother Daniel Greene, formerly a member of the Calvinistic Baptist Church in Pawtucket, and Elder Ray Potter, assembled at the house of Deacon Gardner Buffington, in the village of Pawtucket, on Seekonk side, Mass. for the purpose of joining or embodying themselves together, as a church of Christ.

"After prayer to Almighty God, to be owned, and blessed, and directed by his holy spirit, in the present very solemn and important undertakings, we proceeded to consider the subject for which we met. After conversing upon the subject of church government, and what was to be understood by a visible church of Christ, the following persons joined hands, thereby manifesting that they united themselves together as a church of God; taking the scriptures of truth as their only book of discipline and rule of faith and practice. [Here follow the names which it is unnecessary to transcribe.]

"After the persons above referred to, had united as a church, they unanimously admitted Elder Ray Potter, as one of their members, and likewise as an under shepherd, to take the watch and care of the church. It was also agreed, that Deacon ******* ******** should officiate in said office in the church. The church also chose Elder Ray Potter for their clerk.

"*Although the church has chosen for its pastor Elder Ray Potter, who is likewise considered as a preacher in the Free Will Baptist connexion, yet it is understood that the church is constituted upon the principle of having the privilege and authority to order its own concerns, without being restricted or biassed by any other church or churches whatever.*

"The above record was written, and laid before the church, in meeting, and duly approved by them.

Witness, RAY POTTER, *Clerk.*"

Things seemed to move on prosperously, after the church was constituted; I laboured most diligently, and arduously, as I have already stated, in preaching and teaching school through the winter, and the revival of religion continued. Crowds attended my preaching, and the large school house where we held our meetings, was filled to overflowing. There soon began to be much talk about building a meeting house, and the plan was zealously advocated by Mr. ****, who frequently addressed the crowded auditories on the subject, referring to *me;* that I was actually ruining my constitution faster than I otherwise should do, if I could have a more commodious place to preach in. The sympathy of many was strong for me, and I have no doubt but what hundreds of dollars were given towards erecting a meeting-house, in consequence of the *personal attachment* of the donors to me. Many have since told me this, who contributed largely. The house was in the course of the ensuing summer and fall completed—indeed I think it was finished just about the time that I sunk under the weight of my bodily infirmities, as mentioned in the foregoing Chapter. In the mean time, Mr. *** had been ordained as a preacher of the gospel, having for some time before I was acquainted with him, been in the habit of improving in public. It had been surmised that his sole object in encouraging me to preach in the place, and to be instrumental in the constitution of a church and the erection of a meeting-house was that *he* should take the stand as the minister, after these objects were

effected. As to this, I will not decide—*this might be the case from a good motive.* Be this as it may, I was no sooner debilitated to that state of weakness of body, that I could not preach all of the time, than the church seemed to be in dreadful commotion. Members began to assert that Mr. *** had made propositions to them, or rather given strong indications of a wish to become their preacher—had observed to them that I was considerably expensive to them, whereas he was able to preach to them without compensation. This was to many extremely trying and disagreeable, and as I do not wish to reiterate a statement of these disagreeable circumstances, I will just remark, in short, that the difficulty terminated in the exclusion of Mr. *** from the church and a few other members who attached themselves to him.—No sooner was this step taken, than he (Mr. ***) applied to the Quarterly Meeting for redress, with a recommendation signed by two male members and some twelve or fourteen females (four or five of whom soon retracted, and made their acknowledgment to the church,) and began to talk of the power of the Quarterly Meeting to exercise authority over the church.

The few members alluded to above, as attaching themselves to Mr. ***, were not excluded *until* they had recommended him to the Quarterly Meeting.—One of the male members was the Deacon of the church, and kept the key of the meeting house, and now refused to give the church admittance. It was strongly suspected by the Free Will Baptists, at this time, that I should leave them and join the Methodists—whereas Mr. *** professed great attachment to the Free Will Baptists, and I have every reason to believe that the Quarterly Meeting acted differently from what they would have done, if it had not been for these apprehensions. If I did go, they determined to take what of the church they could get, and the meeting-house—and a meeting-house which was the property of a church, too, which was

never in their connexion—no more than the church in Providence, over which the Rev. Z. Tobey has the pastoral care, is in their connexion. This is exactly a similar case. No one will deny that Elder Tobey belongs to the Free Will Baptist connexion and the Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting, and no one will dispute that the church of which he is a member and pastor, does *not* belong to the connexion—indeed he himself has lately publicly stated this.

In the account of the R. Island Quarterly Meeting held at Smithfield May 10th, 1828, given in the Free Will Baptist Magazine, vol. 2, No. 1, are these words, page 20: "*Br. Tobey observed that the church in Pro-* "*vidence of which he is PASTOR, although not be-* "*longing to the Quarterly Meeting*, were of the same "sentiments with the churches composing this body, "and that he had the pleasure of seeing several of his "brethren present on the occasion."

In precisely this situation was the church in Pawtucket, when the meeting-house lot was deeded to them, when the meeting-house was built, and when they excluded the members mentioned above. But the Quarterly Meeting approbated Mr. *** still as a preacher, and furthermore appointed a committee of four or five, two of whom were preachers, to come down into Pawtucket and enquire into the affairs of the Pawtucket church. Now they had no more business to interfere with the concerns of this church, than they had with the Calvinistic Baptist church in this place, or any other church whatever. This church had never joined their connexion, nor made any application to that effect. They were in every respect as free from all such connexion, as the church in Providence now is which is under the care of Mr. Tobey—and I challenge any or all of the Free Will Baptists in America to shew *one single item of proof* to the contrary.

But to proceed with the doings of this committee. And I will here make an extract from a statement of these dark doings, which I published soon after they transpired.

"But what does this committee do?—I never knew what they did, although the proceedings were transacted months ago, until a few days past; when I heard their resolutions read, for the accomplishment of the end for which it clearly looks to me they were designed, viz. the obtaining of the meeting-house in this place, which is the clearly deeded property of this church. I am not able to give their resolutions verbatim, as I never heard them read but once. But the substance of them were, that they disapproved of the proceedings of the church, with respect to their dealing with Mr. Greene, and those who recommended him; that they recognized "them as the church in Pawtucket, in connexion with the quarterly meeting, and deacon Buffington as a deacon in said church;" and in some kind of language or other, which I cannot give word for word, declared that those, that is the true original church, who had thus dealt with those members—*had gone off, seceded, or withdrawn from them*"!!!

No sooner did the church complain of being unlawfully and sacrilegiously deprived of the use of their meeting-house, than it was asserted by Mr. * * *, and others of the Free Will Baptists, that the church had thrown themselves out of it by declaring themselves "*Independent.*" Never was there a more direct perversion of truth—this I say in view of an awful eternity, and as I expect to meet it at the bar of God. Nor does this depend on my testimony neither; the records of the church* and the testimony of many respectable witnesses back me in this assertion. The church, indeed, when they perceived the unwarrantable interference of the Free Will Baptist preachers and Quarterly Meeting, in their concerns, disclaimed any right which they pretended to, in meddling with their affairs, and continually asserted that they were and *always had been* an independent church. I now ask if they *were not always* an independent church? Shew me the

*Let the reader turn to page 16, and read them.

Quarterly Meeting to which they *ever belonged.* Shew me *when they made application to join* any Quarterly Meeting. Shew me any *communication* from them to this effect. Now if this has ever been done, cannot the Quarterly Meeting give some evidence of it? And would they not have done it before this time, if such a thing ever had been? I insist on this point, as it is *an all important point* to be understood, in this disagreeable affair. And inasmuch as I have been accused of stiffness, uncharitableness, &c. towards certain Free Will Baptists, unbecoming a Christian, I now wish for the candid among them to remember and understand what the *occasion* is that I cannot fellowship certain individuals, viz. *Because of this misrepresentation*, that the church had declared themselves "Independent," and thereby altered or gone off from their original constitution. I wish for truth to prevail, and that those of them who may read this narrative, may know that they have a meeting-house in their connexion, which was obtained by misrepresentation.

But to proceed.—There was much said about deciding the contest repecting the meeting-house in a court of law, as we were continually locked out of it by the Deacon, who had been excluded from the church, but who was in possession of the key. This noise and strife was heart-rending to me, for it was at the time which I have alluded to in the foregoing Chapter, when I was in such great trials of mind, and as for any thought of carrying the difficulty into a *court of law*, I could not endure the idea, and advised the church rather to lose their house, than to pursue such a course. Mr. * * * was a man of large property, and talked much of the law, and of his determination not to give up the house unless thus compelled; but finally agreed to leave it to men. A number of respectable men were mentioned by the church, such as the deacons of the Baptist churches in Providence; but were by him rejected—until finally five men were agreed upon, two of whom were Episcopalians, and of the others, (two if not all) were Universalists.

We met at the meeting-house on the 2d of January, 1823. Both parties made their statements. We in the first place produced the church records, and read the constitution of the church. Secondly, we produced the copy of the deed of the lot, which was dated Sept. 18, 1821, but about eleven months after the church was constituted, which reads as follows:

"*Know all men by these presents, that* WE, Timothy Greene, and Samuel Slater, both of North-Providence, in the State of Rhode-Island, and William Wilkinson, of Providence, in the same State, Esquires, in consideration of our regard and esteem for the Free Will Baptist Church, in Seekonk, Massachusetts, and the sum of one dollar, paid by said Free Will Baptist Church, the receipt whereof we do hereby acknowledge, do hereby give, grant, sell, and convey, unto the deacons of said Free Will Baptist Church, in Seekonk, and their *successors in said Church forever, to and for the sale, use, benefit* and improvement of said Church, in such way and manner, as to said Church may seem meet and proper."

"According to a law of said Commonwealth, passed February 20, 1786, entitled "an act for the better securing, and rendering more effectual, grants and donations, to pious and charitable uses." A certain tract of land on which *said church are now erecting a meeting-house*, situated in Seekonk, aforesaid, in the village of Pawtucket, bounded as follows:" [Here follows the boundary, &c. as usual, which it is unnecessary to transcribe.]

We in the next place shewed that we were the very *same* church to whom the deed was given; nor was there a particle of evidence on the other side that we were *not* the same church, or that we had ever *altered* our constitution, *or seceded* from our original ground on which the church was formed, and of course we claimed the house as our property.

The other party, through their attorney (for Mr. *** had long been consulting one, whereas we never mentioned the subject to an attorney until the day be-

fore the trial) began by undertaking to find out who was the deacon or deacons of the Free Will Baptist church in Seekonk. This he argued would decide the business, for the deed run to the deacon or deacons, (that is, in trust for the church) and in order to make it out that deacon B. was still the deacon, and that the deed did not run to the deacons which the church had *since appointed* as his successors; he argued that this single church *could not displace a deacon!!!* He represented that the notion of a *single church* being independent to *make and unmake deacons* (as he termed it) would upset all order in ecclesiastical affairs, produce confusion, &c. in respect to church government. This string he sounded upon with the utmost energy—and I have reason to believe that it was *here* that the referees were deceived, if I admit they were honest men (which I do not dispute) and was the occasion of their giving in the verdict which they did. For when it is considered that two of them were Episcopalians, whose religious creed strictly condemns the independent plan of church government for which I contended, and on which principles the church was first founded, and the other three did not profess religion, or rather were members of no church, and from their situation and callings must be considered to have known but little about church building in any denomination; I say when these things are considered, and at the same time that the attorney in his plea ridiculed *my notions*, as he termed them, of independancy—that there could not consistently be any such thing; it will look probable that they were as I have before stated, deceived or led astray by mistaken views of the subject. The attorney often hinted at something which he was presently coming to, which was of *importance*, which finally turned out to be the doings of the committee appointed by the Quarterly Meeting, to enquire into the state of the Pawtucket church, which I have already alluded to, page 165, which he termed the doings of the Quarterly Meeting, in *setting up* those whom we had *set down*, &c. and it will be evident to

any one who reads the report of the referees, that the doings of the committee in recognizing those members which the church had excluded, as the original church, and representing that *we had seceded* from them, bore with weight on the minds of the referees, and perhaps was the *turning* point with them in giving the house *as* they did. I will now give the report.

"We, the subscribers, appointed as referees, in a case of the Free Will Baptist Society, in the village of Pawtucket, on the Seekonk side, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, met agreeable to appointment, at the Free Will Baptist meeting house, in said Seekonk, on the 2d day of January, 1823; and, after hearing the several pleas and allegations in said case, agreed to adjourn, to meet at the house of John Baldwin, on the evening of the third of said January, 1823, and having met agreeable to said appointment, and after mature consideration in said case, do make our report in manner following, viz:

"That we consider that the Free Will Baptist meeting house and lot is the property of the Free Will Baptist church in Pawtucket, on the Seekonk side, that is, in connexion with the Quarterly Meeting of that denomination; and that Gardner Buffington is recognized as deacon of said church, *and that no person can legally officiate as deacon in said church, unless such person is ordained or recognized as such, by said Quarterly Meeting, of the denomination of Free Will Baptists.*

"We also find a balance due from the Free Will Baptist church in said Pawtucket, on the Seekonk side, to the Rev. Daniel Greene, of three hundred and twelve dollars and fifteen cents.

"That Deacon Buffington pay the $10 to referees.

"Given under our hands and seals this 3d day of January, 1823."

Now I ask the reader's attention a moment to the report, and a few remarks which I shall make on this same.

And first, it says, "We consider the Free Will Baptist meeting-house and lot is the property of the Free Will Baptist church in Pawtucket, on Seekonk side, that "is, *in connexion with the Quarterly Meeting of that* "*denomination.*" Now observe—I affirm and most solemnly declare, that the lot was deeded in September, 1821, to the church of which I was pastor, that was *not in connexion* with the Quarterly Meeting at that time, nor *never afterwards*, and that said church never transferred said lot or meeting-house to any other church—and that there was no church in Pawtucket, in connexion with the Quarterly Meeting, *until after the meeting-house was completed*, nor until the church, which were the lawful owners of the same, excluded some members, (which by the way did not amount to but about one fifth of the whole church,) *which members* were recognized by the Free Will Baptist Quarterly Meeting, as being a church in their connexion, *long after* the meting-house in question was completed. This I solemnly declare to be truth, and I challenge an item of proof to the contrary, and stake my moral and religious character for truth and veracity on the assertion. And now I ask this plain question—How came it about that this lot and house did not belong in January, 1823, to the same identical church which they did in September, 1821? Did they ever sell them? It is not pretended. Did they ever give them away? It is not pretended. How then *is it* that they did not not belong to them? Now this question I leave with said Quarterly Meeting, and all candid men, women and *children*, for I am persuaded that a boy ten years old, who admits of such a thing as the independent plan of church government, must answer that the same church which owned the house and lot in 1821, were the owners of it when the case came before the referees. Let some certain men read this and remember there is a judgment day!! And let the Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting remember that there is a Babylonish garment and wedge of gold in the camp!! And let them understand that

this is the reason why I dare not fellowship some individuals among them.

But further—the report says, "*And that Gardner Buffington is recognized as deacon of said church, and that no person can legally officiate as deacon in said church, unless such person is ordained or recognized as such, by said Quarterly Meeting of the denomination of Free Will Baptists.*"

Now I again solemnly declare, and am willing to stake my life upon the assertion, that when the lot was deeded to the church, the deacon *never had been recognized nor ordained by the Quarterly Meeting.*—Nor was he ever recognized or ordained by a Free Will Baptist Quarterly Meeting, as deacon in that church, to which the lot was deeded, and unto whom the house belonged—nor of any Free Will Baptist church in Pawtucket, until months after the meeting house was finished, and it is evident that the way the referees *knew he was recognized by the Quarterly Meeting* was by the statement of the doings of the committee to this effect, which took place in the summer of 1822, almost a year after the deed was given!!—The doings of which committee, the attorney before alluded to, considered as of great importance!! Before I conclude these remarks, I will present an extract from the strictures which I made on the subject, about the time of the transaction.

"Now I ask the candid to observe what follows: The deed of this meeting-house was signed, sealed and delivered, in September, 1821; deacon B. had at that time, as I have before stated, no appointment as deacon in this church, but that which he received *from the church;* he never was in a Quarterly Meeting until months after this circumstance; I think in January, when the Quarterly Meeting was at the Belknap meeting-house in Johnson. He never had been appointed, ordained, or recognized as deacon of said church, by any Quarterly Meeting. I ask any man to shew me that he was. I hear no one say that he was. Now tell me if deacon B. when this deed was given, was *legally*

officiating as deacon in said church? if so, *who* placed him in that official capacity? If he was *not* legally officiating at that time, as deacon in said church, how came Mr. *** to have a deed written to a man that could not lawfully hold the property of the church? And how came 'Squire Cushman, who is an attorney and counsellor at law, and who wrote said deed, to say that the donors or sellers of said lot, conveyed it to the deacons of said church, when in reality there was no deacon there? ! ! ! But if it were the case, that there was at that time a deacon legally officiating in said church, unto whom a deed could be given, which certainly Mr. C. and Mr. *** must acknowledge they conceived to be the case, or else they wrote a deed to somebody, that they knew did not exist in that official capacity; then it follows, upon every principle of reason, that the very same authority which *placed* him there in that official capacity, could likewise *displace* him and appoint a successor; and that was the church and the church alone, and we challenge a contrary *to be shown.*

"Even admitting that this church was in the connexion of a Quarterly Meeting, yet they had no more authority to replace said deacon, in said official capacity, contrary to the voice of the majority of this church, than the United States have a constitutional right or authority, to appoint a Governor over this State, without the consent of its inhabitants. This is plain truth."

I *still* beg the attention of the reader. Why was it that these referees made this statement in their report, viz. "*and that Gardner Buffington is recognized as deacon of said church, and that no person can* LEGALLY OFFICIATE AS DEACON *in said church, unless such person is ordained or recognized as such, by said Quarterly Meeting of the denomination of Free Will Baptists.*" Would this subject have constituted one of the most *prominent* features of the report of these referees, unless it had been *agitated by the parties;* or without there had been a dispute respecting it, by the parties,

before the referees? I do not believe there is an understanding, disinterested, and candid man in creation, but what would draw this inference. And this *was* the case. As I have before stated, this was one of the *principal* rallying points of the attorney, who plead against us. He bent all his force to shew the utter inconsistency of our *notions of independency*, and of the authority of a single church to make, (as he termed it) and unmake deacons; and that by taking this ground, we had thrown ourselves out of all right to the house; and because we declared that we always had been an independent church, Mr. * * * stated, as I have before observed, that we had altered, &c.

Now I contended before the referees, that the church which owned the meeting-house, never had been in connexion with the Quarterly Meeting or Free Will Baptist connexion, but was an *independent church*, and had the power to appoint and displace a deacon; and furthermore, that even if we admitted that the church *was* in the connexion, yet *that* would not alter the case as it respected their power to transact their own business without the interference of any other church, or any higher power, like Quarterly Meetings, &c. &c. In proof of this, I quoted some remarks from Elder Buzzell's Magazine, who was a leading man in the denomination.

Vol. ii. No. 1, p. 5.—"They have unanimously agreed to take the Holy Scriptures to be their only rule of *faith* and practice, and book of discipline.

"They, therefore, confess no creed, nor acknowledge any article of faith, or book of discipline but the bible."

And again, page 17:—"Each church has the *exclusive right of doing their own business among themselves*, and with the assistance of an ordained elder, of admitting members, or withdrawing, or of admonishing, and even rejecting them, if need require, agreeable to the rules of Christ and the Apostles."

But since then, more explicit testimony has come from the Free Will Baptists *themselves*, in proof of the

truth of my assertions, which I shall here introduce.—Now let it be attended to, and then judge ye, all ye members of the Free Will Baptist connexion. Elder Tobey, of Providence, at the time of this difficulty, *highly disapproved* of the proceedings of the Quarterly Meeting in this affair. Nevertheless, he felt an attachment to the Free Will Baptists, *as a denomination* at large, and could not believe that they generally maintained the ideas of church government, which was assumed by the Free Will Baptists in this quarter, in their plea, that a *single church* was not independent to transact all of its own business. He accordingly wrote to some of the leading men in the denomination, on the subject, and received letters from Elder John Buzzell, of Parsonfield, (Me.) who is one of the oldest preachers in the denomination, and who had written a *history* of the denomination, and Elder Chace, of New-Hampshire, who was then editor of the Religious Informer, the only Free Will Baptist paper, which was then published in the connexion. Elder Tobey published extracts from these letters in the "*Rhode-Island Baptist*," Vol. I. No. 8, p. 176, where any man who wishes, may see for himself. He signs the communication "O. F. B." I will here give an extract which comprises the evidence I just now alluded to.

"In relation to the independency of their churches, Elder Buzzell says:—'Our churches, both collectively and individually, acknowledge Christ as their only head and law-giver; and consider themselves amenable only to him, (without the interference of Lord Bishops, Popes or Synods, to make and impose laws upon them;) they have, therefore, universally adopted his perfect law of liberty, (the Holy Scriptures) as their only *rule* of faith and practice, and book of church discipline, to the exclusion of all creeds, articles of faith, church platforms, &c. made by men. It should be understood, that they have first given themselves to the Lord, and then to one another, by the will of God. So, that notwithstanding they consider themselves as so many separate and *independent*

churches, with Christ as their head ; yet they consider themselves united in one common cause, under the same head, even Christ ; all enjoying equal rights and equal privileges, and all under gospel obligation to watch over, aid, assist and build each other up in their most holy faith, agreeable to the rules given by him and his Apostles ; hence they assume the title of "The United Churches of Christ."

"On the same subject, Elder Chase observes :—'I understand that the churches are *free and independent of each other ;* have power to admit members or reject them, to *choose officers or displace them* without any assistance from any other body of people. We associate together, and form our Quarterly and Yearly Meetings, for the purpose of hearing from each other, and taking counsel together.'"

Now the proverb is, black may lie, and white may lie ; but black and white *together* will not lie. Here is the testimony in black and white, of two men, who certainly ought to know the order of the denomination, and according to *their testimony*, if the church in Pawtucket was, when the lot was deeded to them, and the meeting-house built in the Free Will Baptist connexion, (which was not the case) yet, they did not alter or secede from their original standing, by *declaring that they were independent to govern their own concerns, to appoint and displace deacons;* for Elder Buzzell declares, "that they (that is the churches of Free Will Baptists) consider themselves as so many *separate* and INDEPENDENT churches, with Christ at their head ; and Elder Chace says, "I understand that the churches are FREE AND INDEPENDENT OF EACH OTHER ; *have power to admit members or reject them ;* TO CHOOSE OFFICERS OR DISPLACE THEM, WITHOUT ANY ASSISTANCE FROM ANY OTHER BODY OF PEOPLE."

Now if these men tell the truth, I ask what a certain preacher from New-Hampshire, (an old man too) meant, when he got up and stated before those referees, that a deacon must be authorized, or recognized by a Quarterly Meeting, before he could legally offici-

ate in Free Will Baptist churches, or something to this amount; *there was one who made such a statement as this.* I spare his name; but if called upon, can give it with evidence to prove, (if respectable witnesses will prove anything,) the fact above asserted. And furthermore I ask—yes, I ask in the name of justice, of religion, the cause of God, and every thing else which is good—I ask of the Quarterly Meeting of the Free Will Baptists at large, if Elder Buzzell and Elder Chace speak the truth, what right had the Quarterly Meeting, after the church in Pawtucket had excluded a few members, which was but a very *small minority*, even admitting the church *was in the connexion*, (which was not the case) I say what right have the Quarterly Meeting to call these few members, which had been excluded from the church, the *original church*, and contend that deacon * * *, who was one of these excluded members, had not been *regularly displaced* from his office in the church where he stood when the lot was deeded? And once more I ask them, and all men, women and children, who can read, and understand that two and two make four, how they can reconcile the statement of Elders Buzzell and Chace, with this report of referees, that *no person can officiate in a Free Will Baptist Church, unless such person is ordained and recognized as such, by the Quarterly Meeting of said denomination, &c.*

Now if they maintain that they fairly obtained this house, and that the verdict of these referees is in accordance with the principles of church government among the Free Will Baptists, ought they to approve of the testimony of these ministers, who directly contradicted it. Can they consistently maintain both!!!! O selfishness, what hast thou not done? I do not condemn the referees. I do not say aught against them as men or gentlemen—but I do believe they were not very well versed in ecclesiastical affairs, and were misled. Indeed the testimony of the man which I have already alluded to, from New-Hampshire, was calculated to lead them to the conclusion that no per-

son could legally officiate in a Free Will Baptist church, unless put there by the Quarterly Meeting, and of course, that no power short of that, could displace him—and consequently that the church in Pawtucket could not displace Deacon Buffington. But I have now proved (remember by whom) by the *Free Will Baptists themselves*, that this is not so. And that my notions of the independency of individual churches is also by *them* admitted.

But to proceed: I do not expect ever to be more disappointed in relation to any of the changeable things of this life, than I was when I heard the verdict of these referees—or more deeply wounded. I was almost certain that they would give us the house; nor did I consider it possible that any men whatever, when hearing the case stated, could do any otherwise than to give it to the church for whom it was built but a few months before, unto whom it was clearly deeded, and who had never by any alteration thrown themselves out of it, nor never had transferred it. But it was not so—they gave it to a few *excluded members* of this church, as has been shewn. It has been intimated to me since the great excitement has taken place in respect to masonry in this country, that the referees in this case were under masonic influence, in giving in their verdict. They were all of them, I believe, but one, Royal Arch masons, and so was Mr. ***, whereas I had taken but one degree in masonry, about a year before and stopped, being disgusted with the conduct of some masons, and having some trials of mind in respect to the propriety of Christians or ministers having anything to do with the subject. This I had mentioned to Mr. ***, at whose suggestion and persuasion I took this degree, and it has been supposed that in consequence of this hesitation about proceeding, I was looked upon *suspiciously* by masons, as calling in question the moral and religious tendency of the institution, whereas Mr. *** was strong in his professions of attachment to the order; and being also a high mason, this had an influence, as mentioned above. But I cannot believe this *yet*, nor

will I at present indulge such a thought, although I confess there is something in it, that it is impossible for me to account for on any other principle than their minds being misled on the subject of church government, as it respected the ground which I contended we were constituted upon, the power of the church to appoint and displace its own deacons, &c. But when it is shewn them that this principle was correct, even according to the order of the Free Will Baptists themselves, as I have proved by the concurrent testimony of Elders Buzzell and Chace, and when it is seen, as I have already stated (and shall presently recapitulate the evidence) that the church which were the true owners of the meeting-house, never were in connexion with the Free Will Baptist Quarterly Meeting; I say when *this* is laid before them, if they shall persist in justifying the verdict that the lot and meeting-house are the property of the Free Will Baptist church *in connexion* with the Quarterly Meeting; and that no person can legally officiate in said church, unless said person is ordained or recognized as such by said Quarterly Meeting, &c. *then* let them abide the verdict which all impartial, disinterested men will pass on their proceedings. I do not believe they will, because if they were not impartial and honest in their intentions in giving their verdict, (which, by the way I wish to have understood I do not *yet question*) and apprehended that my obscurity in life, poverty, &c. would place them beyond the reach of justice and public condemnation; yet it will appear as bright and clear as the morning sun, that they have something to do with others besides myself, in this affair. The Free Will Baptist connexion themselves are *my witnesses*, as well as a multitude of others—and the public will read—they will see, and they will judge.—It was not the loss of the property which so deeply wounded me—no, God is my witness. It was, that falsehood triumphed, and truth and justice were trampled under foot. I immediately determined to withdraw from the Free Will Baptists, and addressed

a letter to the Quarterly Meeting to be held at Smithfield on the 3d Saturday and Sabbath in January, 1823. It is a fact almost too shameful to relate, that this letter which I addressed to the Quarterly Meeting was *stopped in the Elders' Conference*, previous to the meeting or assembling of the Quarterly Meeting, where there were some five or six ministers, there opened, and they (the Elders Conference) proceeded to excommunicate me from the Free Will Baptist connexion. Do you believe this, reader? I will here also bring you evidence from *themselves*, to prove it—viz. that the letter was addressed to the Quarterly Meeting, and that they (the Elders' Conference) opened and read it before the Quarterly Meeting assembled, (that is, on Friday, whereas the Quarterly Meeting did not get together until Saturday)—let it also be remembered that I intend to show by the letter, which I now present, from the Elders' conference, that the church in Pawtucket under my care, are the lawful owners of the meeting-house referred to—Here follows a copy, *verbatim et literatim*.*

"Elder Ray Potter—

"We are now under the nesesity of informing you of the result of the preasent conferance, holden in Smithfield, (fore the R. I. Quarterly Meetting) on friday, 17th of Jan. 1823.

"The conferance took into consideration your conduct, towards the conection, the Elders and certain individuals. it appeared that you had proceded contrary to scripture and the sperit, of the gospel, in holding and manifesting felowship with the unfruitfull works of darkness, in that you have the pastorall care of a church who, cut off a number of good Members from the church without shewing sufficient caus, or eney thing in them suficiently grievous to announce

* I have not caused this letter to appear thus, that is, with a regard to its orthography and grammatical construction, from any other motive, than to be enabled to say, that it was inserted here as I received it.

them guilty of such death or bonds. After evrey other efort failed, 2 elders of good Report, by choice of the Conferance; as a comittee visited you, but could gain no satisfaction but Rather evil treatment.

"you did agree in conferance to do all in your power to afect a union, but insted theirof, continued to keep up seperation, you agreed with D. G. Buffington and others; to abide the judgment of certain chosen men to sit in counsell upon the subject of the Metting house, also that you would not hold Mettings in the schoolhouse, let the matter turn as it would; and then continued to hold forth as you had before done; and at the same time manifesting a disatisfaction concerning the judgment of the chosen men or counsell as above mentioned.

"you then forworrded a letter to the Q. Metting that contained such statements as are unbecoming a Christian as even expose you to the civil lawe, in said letter you brught certain charges against a brother, which charges you once solemnly declared never to bring up again, you toterley renounced, and disaprobated the proceedings of the; Conferance, and conection, in Regard to their manner of delings with you and your associates. In short after you had been 6 months under admonition repetedly visited fore termes of reconsileation to no afect, but finding your conduct unfavorable towards every rational propersition in that a censorous sperit mixed with evident Marks of revenge seamed to betray itself continuly in most of your carriage, and in writing upon the exigencies of grief the same was manifest.

"After a clear investigation of the several inprudent steps you had taken, and observing an unwillingness to Confess your missteeps, the conferance unanimously voted to withdraw fellowship from you, and Reject you from the conection, as a disorderly walker, hoping that you may be left to discover the vast importance of a more holey, and godley walk, mixed with that tenderness seen in the Life and of Jesus. We therefore informe you, and the world that you are

no more a member of the Free Will Baptist conection nor can be without confession and satisfaction to your brethren.

" Signed in behalf of the Elders' Conferance
Attest
REUBEN ALLEN Clerk of sd Con"

It will be readily observed, that the charge brought against me by the Conference was, " *that I had the pastoral care of a church, who cut off a number of good members from the church, without shewing sufficient cause*, &c. This was the conduct of which I was guilty, which was contrary to scripture and the spirit of the gospel." It was not contended that my moral and religious character were not good,* but the charge was, that I had the care of this church which was so bad, and all the rest of the charges, it will be seen, grew out of this, and are inseparably connected with it. Now what church was this, of which I had the care at that time? I never had the pastoral care of but one church. And I ask again, what church is *that*, mentioned in this letter from the Elders' Conference? Why the very church of which I have given a copy from the records, constituted October 7, 1820;

* But a short time after this, I received the following:

PAWTUCKET, (R. I.) AUGUST 23, 1825.

This may certify, that the bearer, Rev. RAY POTTER, is a mininister of the gospel of character and reputation in this village; and as such, is freely admitted to preach in my pulpit. The peculiarities of his situation, he will best explain.

DAVID BENEDICT,
Pastor of the Baptist Church in this place.

PAWTUCKET, (R. I.) MAY 17, 1826.

This may certify, that the bearer, Rev. RAY POTTER, is a Baptist minister of good reputation for piety and talents, in this place; and although he is not in full connexion with our churches, yet we freely interchange ministerial labours with him; and herewith recommend him to the kind attention of our brethren and the Christian public, in the journey he is about to take.

DAVID BENEDICT,
Pastor of the Baptist Church in Pawtucket.
STEPHEN GANO,
Pastor of the First Baptist Church in Providence.

this same church the meeting-house was built for, and the lot deeded to, September 18, 1821; and these "*good members*" which this letter says the church cut off without sufficient cause, &c. were *then in it.* This, I presume none will deny; for how could they be *cut off* from the church, *if they were not in it?* Well, were they not in, or members of that church which owned the meeting-house? Or did not the church *when* they were members, own the meeting-house? This will not be denied neither. Now if they, that is these three male members, with some few females, were really the original church, I wish to know *what church* that was, for which I was condemned, merely for having the pastoral care? Certainly, I never had the care of but one church, and this church, say the Elders' Conference, cut off a number of good members, &c. Now if any man or child can tell me how these "good members" can be *the church* which *cut them off*, I will acknowledge that I have learned something new in metaphysics. I should think this as hard to be understood as any point of Calvinism. Let it be remembered that these few members, which in this letter, the Elders' Conference acknowledge to be cut off or excommunicated from the church, that is, *the original church*, they all along contended, and before the referees, *were the original church* to which the house belonged. Now the fault of the church of which I had the care, is *this:* according to the letter, "*cutting off a number of good members from the church without sufficient cause,*" &c. Now admitting the church to have been in the connexion, and supposing the Quarterly Meeting had pretended to reject *them* for what the Elders' Conference considered their bad conduct, how would they have worded their letter of excommunication to said church, and not contradicted their statement, that these few members were the *original church* to which the meeting-house lot was deeded? It must be in the following style: We reject you, the original church, constituted in Pawtucket, October 7, 1823, because you are guilty of the unfruitful works of darkness, in cutting off the original church, or the same church

which you are, constituted in Pawtucket, October 7, 1823!!! Finally, any man must be a complete novice, or totally blind by supreme selfishness, not to see that this letter proves what I have before asserted, that these members which were afterwards called the Free Will Baptist Church in Pawtucket, in connexion with the Quarterly Meeting; and unto whom the referees gave the house, were not the church unto whom the lot was deeded, nor for whom the house was built;—for they acknowledge they were *cut off*, or excluded members from *that church*, under my care; and the date of their exclusion was April 20, 1822. Mr. **** and the others, May 21; months after the meeting-house was completed. And to conclude these remarks, I make the following statements. And,

1. As to the meeting-house being the property of a church in connexion with the Quarterly Meeting. I say positively and solemnly, that the church for whom the house was built, and to whom the lot was deeded, *never was* in connexion with the Quarterly Meeting; and of those who have contended to the contrary, I ask, *when they made application to join? and when were they admitted? Where did the Quarterly Meeting sit, when these things were done?* When was there any vote passed by that Church to join the Quarterly Meeting?

Now if these things had ever been done, would there not have been some evidence of it? But I challenge the least particle of proof of these things. Does not every body of common sense know, that a single Church, in order to become a member of a Quarterly Meeting, Association, Conference, Yearly Meeting, &c. *must make application to join*, and must be admitted or voted in, before they can belong, or be in connexion with said Quarterly Meeting, &c. I say every one knows this. And again I ask, when did the church for whom that meeting-house was built, make application to join, or were voted into the Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting. I say once more, there was nothing of this ever done, nor no such movement at all.—Now here, it will be observed, is the important point;

and if I do not here state the truth, let some one *shew to the contrary*. If that church ever did make application to join, either by verbal or written communication, it must be very easy to make it appear; together with the time when, the place where, &c. AND IF THE QUARTERLY MEETING DO NOT DO THIS, HOW CAN THEY FACE THE PUBLIC IN UPHOLDING AND COUNTENANCING THOSE PERSONS, WHO SET UP THE PLEA, THAT THE MEETING-HOUSE WAS BUILT FOR, AND THE LOT DEEDED TO A CHURCH, THAT DID BELONG TO THE QUARTERLY MEETING.

They have men of talents among them *now*—let them answer this question.

How can that part of the verdict stand the test of impartial investigation, viz:—"that the meeting-house, lot, &c. is the property of the Free Will Baptist Church, in Pawtucket, in connexion with the Quarterly Meeting of that denomination, when it is evident, and no man can show a particle of substantial proof to the contrary, that the church for whom the house was built, and to whom the lot was deeded, NEVER WAS IN SAID CONNEXION. Although I may be obscure, and belong to no popular connexion to help me in this affair, yet the voice of truth will yet sound louder than thunder, and shake to its centre every unholy confederacy to suppress it. There is now exactly a similar case to ours, as it respects the situation of the church and ministers, in relation to the Free Will Baptist connexion. Rev. Zalmon Tobey, of Providence, is a member and minister of the Free Will Baptist connexion—but the church to which he statedly preaches, and of which he is pastor, is not, as I have shewn, page 164, in said connexion, and but a short time since, Rev. Martin Cheny was in the same church, and now suppose him at the same time to belong to the Free Will Baptist connexion, as Mr. *** did, and suppose also, a few members, with Mr. Cheny, were to have been excommunicated from the Providence church, and then these few members

should have been owned as a church by the Quarterly Meeting, could they have justly claimed the property of the Providence church; the original church?!!! God forbid, says every honest man. But this was precisely the case in Pawtucket, ☞and no man can deny it.

2. As to that part of the verdict—"*and no person can legally officiate as deacon in said church, unless such person is ordained or recognized as such by said Quarterly Meeting, &c.* I think I have sufficiently shewn its absurdity (see pages 171, 2, 3) I have shewn that at the time the lot was deeded, and the house built, and when Dea. B—— *was officiating* in the church, he never had been ordained nor recognized by said Quarterly Meeting, nor never was in, or at a Quarterly Meeting until after the house was completed, if his own word may be taken as proof. I have also shewn that he was excluded from the church he was in when the lot was deeded and the house built. And that said church *had power* thus to displace him, I have shewn by the *Free Will Baptists themselves.* So that even if it had been the case that the church had belonged to the Quarterly meeting, this part of the verdict must fall, or they (Elders Buzzell and Chace) have not told the truth respecting the independency of their churches, and the power of individual churches to *displace their officers.* That Dea. B*** was displaced by the church, I have *evidence in writing signed by himself*, and yet the verdict declares he is deacon of the church to whom the property belongs.

3. Every body knows, who were acquainted with this disagreeable circumstance, that it was declared by those who finally obtained the property, that the church of which I have the care, threw themselves out of it by *seceding, or going off from their original ground*, and that this alteration consisted in declaring themselves *independent*, and it was said that "we had become an independent church," &c. Now hear me, all ye candid Free Will Baptists. *This* could not be *altering* or *seceding*, even if the church *was in the con-*

nexion, to declare they were independent; if Buzzell and Chace have told the truth, for they say of the Free Will Baptists, that the churches "*consider themselves as so many separate and independent churches*," (says Buzzell) and I understand that the churches are *free and independent of each other*, (says Chace,) and yet when this church began to declare that the Quarterly Meeting had no authority to interfere in their government, but that they were *independent* to manage their own concerns—we were told that this was altering. Now let any person read what Buzzell and Chace wrote to Mr. Tobey, and which was published in the "Rhode-Island Baptist," for May, 1824, No. 8; pages 176, 177, which I have transcribed, and then ask themselves the question whether such a declaration of the church's rights and privileges would be altering or seceding from its original ground, *even if it had belonged to the connexion.* But that the church never was in the connexion, and of course perfectly independent from all Quarterly Meetings, from its first organization until this moment, I constantly affirm.

As I have already alluded to the subject of stating the foregoing circumstances and difficulties in the preface, and also in the commencement of this Chapter, I would here observe, that, when I first contemplated writing and making public an account of the dealings of God with me, I thought I should say nothing about the foregoing unpleasant circumstances which have transpired in relation to some of the Free Will Baptists and myself. But on more mature reflection and deliberation, I knew not how to consistently avoid it. The affair seemed so linked in with other things which I wished to relate, besides being under the necessity of often mentioning it, that I thought the reader would seem to demand a short history of the affair, and if he did not have it, might draw unfavourable inferences, that I was unwilling that the truth in relation to the subject should be known. If it be objected that what I have written is gratuitous, and uncalled for, in-

as much as I already have published a statement of the facts in the case; I would answer—That I expect this book will be read by hundreds who never saw, and it is likely never will see, what I have already published; besides, I consider that the united testimony of Elders Buzzell and Chace, in favour of the position which I took on the subject of church government, another unanswerable objection to the proceedings of our opponents, in the course which they pursued in relation to the difficulty. And this testimony has been given since I published the "Poor Man's Defence." But the reason which bore with the most weight on my mind, while deliberating on this subject, and which perhaps turned the scale in favour of making the foregoing statement is, that I consider that I have been, and still am, *unreasonably* and unjustly *censured*, by some of the Free Will Baptists, as being *obstinate*, *hard and revengeful*, in respect to this subject. In illustration of this, I will state one circumstance, among others which might be mentioned. Some eight or nine years since, I became acquainted with the Rev. Mr. ***, who now preaches in Providence, and soon conceived for him, as I trust, a strong Christian affection. But few ever lay nearer my heart, although at the time that our acquaintance commenced, he was a professed Calvinist, and I an Arminian. It was not a long time, however, before he gave up his system of theology and embraced Arminianism. I believe he thought considerably of uniting with the Free Will Baptists before the affair took place which I have been exhibiting, but seemed much disgusted with their conduct towards me, condemned it, and indeed wrote to some of the preachers in the Eastern country on the subject; and thus gave his opinion from time to time decidedly in my favour. In the mean time, he concluded to remove from the church unto whom he had been preaching, as it was in connexion with the Association Baptists. The people in Providence in the neighbourhood where brother T— and myself had been preaching, having built a meeting-house, and being anxious to settle a minister, gave

him a call to preach in their house and made application to brother T— and myself to use our influence with the brethren and sisters who had been gathered through our instrumentality, to be organized into a church under his pastoral care. This we readily did— or at least, I can speak for myself, that I used my influence (and I had some) with my friends in his favour—with friends too who were dear to me, and for whose salvation I had laboured most indefatigably; travelling on foot and preaching to them in great bodily weakness. He was accordingly settled with them, but still seemed anxious to become connected with some larger denomination of Christians, and often mentioned the subject to me, and frequently referred to the *Christians* and Free Will Baptists. As for me, my mind was settled that I should never again unite with the Free Will Baptists, nor was I anxious at all to become connected with any denomination in particular; any further than I then stood. I considered that I was a member of a regularly constituted and gospel church of the Lord Jesus, who were possessed of all the power of church discipline which could be possessed on earth, and furthermore, felt willing to meet all Christians on bible ground. Mr. *** talked considerebly on the subject, but finally told me one day, that he had given up the idea of joining the Free Will Baptists, and suggested the plan of forming a little Conference or connexion among ourselves. I readily acquiesced, as did also brother T—, of Cranston, and we in due time laid the subject before our respective churches. The churches fell in with the proposal, and accordingly the plan was consummated, by adopting a constitution which they considered appropriate, the principal import of which was, that they were to meet together at stated times, for mutual benefit. We gave it the name of the Rhode-Island Union Conference, it being made up of the Cranston, Pawtucket and Providence churches only. This we did not mean to have understood to be a new denomination, but only meant it as a kind of *union meeting*, for

the purposes specified above.* I soon, however, discovered that Mr. *** was by no means satisfied, but that his mind was that we should all go into the Free Will Baptist connexion. At any rate, that he was determined to go himself, and if all the rest of us would not accompany him, to carry as many with him as he could. Indeed I have lately been told, that within a few months he has said that his *design* in forming the Conference was in due time to prevail on the whole to go in among the Free Will Baptists. But let that be as it may, he seemed uneasy, and I believe every time we met in ministers' meeting, proposed something of the like, which to me was extremely disagreeable and trying. To be short, however, he eventually joined the connexion. To me it was a wound deeper than I had often felt, it being attended with circumstances peculiarly cutting, from the consideration that he had hitherto reprobated their conduct towards me. I had always loved him as I never had loved but few on earth; and moreover he took the right hand of fellowship in the very house which had been, as I considered, wickedly wrested from the lawful owners; and took the hand of fellowship, too, from the very person with whom the difficulty commenced. And this immediately in the neighbourhood where I resided, accompanied with apparent triumphing over me by the party who had always bitterly opposed me, and particularly their leader. I tried however to bear it patiently and submit my case to God.

Mr. *** now stood in the relation to me as holding me an excommunicated member; for it will be readily remembered by the reader, that this same connexion with which he thus united, had rejected me from their fellowship, as a disorderly walker, as I have already shewn by their letter (see p. 180) *and that they still held me as such.* Now notwithstand-

* I observe lately, that the plan is adopted by many churches, both Congregationalists and Baptists. I believe they meet quarterly, and find the practice attended with beneficial results. They style their meetings "Union Conferences."

ing Mr. *** still professed to me and my friends to highly esteem me as a Christian, and to fellowship me as a minister of the gospel, yet this looked to me absurd and contradictory. I had from time to time urgent invitations from my friends in that part of the town to come and preach. I refused to preach with Mr. ***, as I considered it to be the most contradictory conduct that could be conceived of, for him to hold me as an excluded member from his connexion, and at the same time approbate me as a preacher of the gospel, and insist on my preaching in his pulpit. Besides, I could not manifest entire freedom with him under existing circumstances, without acting hypocritically. I reasoned in this way: Suppose I were travelling in any part of the United States where I was not known, and should undertake to preach, and should be met with the accusation that I was an excluded person, and should undertake to vindicate myself by telling my accusers that I was owned as a minister of the gospel in good standing in my own neighbourhood; and should be interrogated by my accusers in this way—Who owns you? Answer, Rev. Mr. *** of Providence—Q. Is not he a member of the Free Will Baptist connexion.—A. Yes. Well, say my accusers, here is the Free Will Baptist paper giving an account of the doings of the Elders' Conference for the Rhode-Island Quarterly Meeting, and stating explicitly that you were at such a time rejected by them as a disorderly walker—have you ever been received back again? A. No. Then you bear the evident marks of an *impostor* and a *liar*, in saying that Mr. *** fellowships you, when he is *a member of that very conference*, who *now hold you as an excommunicated member*, and of course *he* must also thus hold you. Now I appeal to any candid man under heaven, if the above is not fair unsophisticated reasoning, and conclusions from the true premises. And it grieved me exceedingly that Mr. *** would pretend to hold me in fellowship in Providence among my friends, when in reality he could not do it consistently. In joining that connex-

ion, he must join and acknowledge the act of the body in expelling me, and there is precisely as much consistency in his pretending fellowship with me after joining the Free Will Baptist connexion as there would be in an individual member of a church who should bring forward an excluded member to the communion table. The cases are precisely similar; and I knew it, and therefore could not feel free to cover it up; for it looked to me just like a thing of *convenience* to *own* me in Providence and *reject* me in other places. Besides, when I reflected that I had always been his constant friend, done all which lay in my power for him when first coming among that people, and that he had always disapprobated the proceedings of the Free Will Baptists to me, and then to unite heart and hand with them under the circumstances already mentioned, I confess that I felt injured, but what hurt me worse than all the rest was, that, because I did not feel as if it would be at all consistent for me to unite with Mr. * * * in preaching in his pulpit, but preached some in private houses and in the hall where brother T. * * and myself formerly held our meetings, before the meeting house was built, I was represented as *wickedly opposing* Mr. * * *; and indeed he stopped me in the street and sharply reprimanded me for doing so, told me my conduct was unchristian-like, and went so far as to say that I had no right—no *Christian* right to preach in that part of the town, excepting I preached in the meeting-house. This I presume will not be denied. The consequence was that a powerful prejudice was raised against me. Mr. * * * represented himself, and was represented by others as being *entirely free with me*, anxious that I should preach in his pulpit, wished to be on good terms with me, &c. whereas I was represented obstinate, willful, determined on opposing such a clever man; and it seemed to have, what I fear was the *designed* effect; viz. to prejudice the minds of those who had before been friendly and apparently much attached to me, against me. In order for the reader to have a just idea of

the true state of the case, let him imagine a *poor fellow* thrown down in the mud by *an host* of opposers, and thus *held down* until by and by some one who had all along professed to be the poor fellow's friend, and had reprobated the conduct of his opposers, finds it convenient to turn to, join hands with them, and in addition to all their weight, throw his own ponderous weight on him too, and, forsooth, begin to call him very obstinate, and willful, because he will not stand up!!! Now this is an exact illustration of the case. Not that I care one straw about the doings of the Elder's Conference in respect to me, that is, as to the validity thereof, for they *acted in no church capacity* at all; besides I had withdrawn from the connexion before, and forwarded my letter to the Quarterly Meeting, accordingly. Yet this makes no difference to them, as it respects the *intention* evidently to do me what harm they could, touching my standing as a minister, and if my lips *have not* been closed in silence, yet, there can, I think, be no propriety in *their* asking any thanks at all on the account of it. So as it respects a willingness, they have thrown me down, *keep me down*, and Mr. *** has added his weight to the rest, and now thinks I am very *obstinate*, that I won't stand up!!!*

I am willing if I am *not right in my ideas* on the subject, to be informed wherein I err. And now I will ask the reader, whether I am justifiable or not, in stating what I have. I am, I trust, willing to forgive injuries, and to meet all Christians on consistent bible ground; but I do not intend to trifle with the *discipline of the church of Christ.* Now the Free Will Baptist Elders' Conference, have certainly pretended to *exclude me from their fellowship*, and if they have "*Thus saith the Lord*," for their proceedings, why, they are sacredly bound to *maintain* the stand which

* Mr. *** says that he had nothing to do with the proceedings of the Free Will Baptists against me at the time—No. But *after* he had seen their conduct in trying to put me down, and at the time condemned it, he now throws his weight *upon me.* Does that make it any better?!

they have taken. And if this be so, most certainly, if I do not repent and acknowledge to them, I shall finally be shut out of the kingdom of heaven ; for what is bound on earth, agreeably with the word of God, is bound in heaven ! But if they have taken an unwarrantable and an unscriptural stand against me ; if they have persecuted me for opposing iniquity ; and if they have done all in their power to hedge up my way when God has sent me to preach the gospel ; then let them be assured, and all who may join with them in such an unholy oppression, that great is the truth, and *that it will prevail.* I have felt wounded, if I may so speak, to the very centre of my soul, in consequence of the prejudice which it seems to me was *intentionally* raised against me in the neighbourhood of Mr. *** as already stated. In the commencement, I wrote to one of the leading men of the society, to endeavour to explain the true state of the case ; but instead of obtaining any satisfaction, I received a letter in answer, fraught with expressions, calculated to cause still more disagreeable feelings. I mourned before God, and besought him, if it might be his will, to remove me from a world of ingratitude, misrepresentation, inconstancy, tribulation and wo ! I was, perhaps, wrong in this, and did not exercise that patience and resignation to my lot, which a Christian ought, in the greatest trials, and under the most distressing circumstances. Let those who may have had some knowledge of this affair, and who may have joined in the clamour of condemning me, remember, that I am journeying to meet them at the bar of God, where the cause will be settled forever! As bad as I may be, I rejoice in the idea of a JUDGMENT DAY ! !

P. S.—I would here mention that I have lately been informed that Mr. David Jencks, who was one of the referees, was of a different opinion from the verdict, and long contended to give us the house, or at least divide, but was out-voted. This I am informed has been stated by another of the referees, who stated it when it was mentioned that masonry was thought by

some to have had an influence in the affair, and also that they himself thought that we ought to have had the house, but that they could not consistently give it to us. I wrote some questions and sent to him, requesting of him distinct answers, in relation to the subject.

I have not yet received a direct answer from the gentleman in due form, but have understood that he assigned this as a reason why the referees could not give us the house, viz. because we excluded Dea. B. * * * and others; the referees considering we had no right to do this. This corresponds with the plea which was set up by our opponents. How reasonable and just this is, I leave for the reader to judge. I trust however, that even these gentlemen who set on the case, if they shall take the trouble to review it, will find that they erred in judgment or rather were misled, Elders Buzzell and Chace themselves being judges. Any other error I do not impute to them.

Reflections.

In view of the proceedings of the Free Will Baptists, in respect to the meeting-house, and other conduct towards me, I am fully satisfied that although *they did very wrong*, yet *God did perfectly right.* I deserved all this chastisement, and infinitely more, for my *selfish sectarian* attachment to that denomination. This I have already mentioned, and it seemed altogether proper, and infinite wisdom saw fit so to order it, that this "*hobby*," (I mean sectarianism) on which I had rode with so much self-complacency, should throw me off and *bite me!*

I do not lay much stress on ordinary dreams, but I remember of dreaming just before this difficulty took place, of riding full speed, when suddenly the horse threw me off and tried to kill me! And just before the notable proceedings of the Elders' conference, whose letter I have given *verbatim*, I was most sensibly and remarkably affected in my sleep, by imagining that I received a blow that almost terminated my

existence, and at the same moment, accompanying it, the name of a Free Will Baptist preacher, of New-Hampshire, who was very active in the affair, seemed to be really sounded in my ears. It awoke me from my sleep, and I soon found it verified.

I will here take the liberty to warn my reader to beware of the baneful spirit of *selfish sectarianism*.—It is to be feared that it has a prevalence in the minds of most professors of religion, at the present time, to an extent most injurious to the cause of truth and righteousness in the earth. It closes the minds of thousands in error, and forever shackles them with the sentiments of *their denomination*, whether right or wrong. If they undertake to investigate the theological opinions of others, they do it with such a jaundiced eye of prejudice, as to preclude all conviction of the truth of sentiments which they have been predisposed to condemn or the futility of their own.

The simple name of their denomination, seems frequently to be their idol; and one would think, sounds more sweetly in their ears, than the adorable name of Jesus! O what a great pity, that the mystical body of Christ, our common Lord, should thus be torn and wounded. I am not pleading for that thing falsely called charity, which is continually crying up an indiscriminate fellowship of *every thing*, which pleases to put on the garb of religion, and the name of truth; although as far from what it professes, as light is from total darkness; by no means. We ought to be extremely careful what we receive for truth. We should search for truth, as if we realized that our eternal all depended on the result; yet this care by no means precludes the *free investigation* of our sentiments, and those of others; but rather leads immediately to it; and solemnly forbids us on peril of the displeasure of God, being warped so far by prejudice, as to reject the light of scripture and reason from predominating in our minds. Yet how many are there, who, when you read plain scripture to them, reject it, because, for-

sooth, it contradicts the ideas of their denomination. Now this is what I would warn my reader to beware of; for how can we expect that God will look on such conduct but with displeasure and holy indignation.—Jesus Christ says, that his sheep shall never perish; yet this has no effect on the minds of thousands, towards convincing them that it is so; why? because *our denomination*, our preachers, our *great* and *good* men say, that such an idea is a branch of Calvinism, and a fruitful twig of the "*horrible decrees!*"

I would advise you to be careful, reader, or you may be filled with your own ways. God may chastise you in the same way that he did me, and although there is no more thanks due to *them*, who were used as the rod, on this score, than there was to the armies of the Assyrians, whom God took and used to punish Israel, yet I acknowledge that it was *that* which I deserved from my God for worshipping the denomination to which I belonged. We must stand as single souls before the bar of the great I AM, and happy will it be for us, if it shall be found that our God on the earth, was the Lord the creator of all worlds!

CHAPTER IX.

Further examination and renunciation of the Arminian system, &c.

I now resume the subject in respect to the exercises of my mind and a further examination and renunciation of the Arminian System. And the question how one comes to Christ, and submits to God; while another with *precisely the same privileges* and as good by nature, continues impenitent, rejects Christ, and lives and dies in rebellion against God, I soon found could not be answered by Arminians according to their system. It never *has* been satisfactorily answered by them, nor never will be. I have already made some

remarks on this in the reflections on the 2d chapter, (see pages 38, 39.) The answer which they pretend to give amounts to no answer at all. They say because one repents, while the other does not, &c. This is just as much of a rational answer to the question as if I in answering the question, "why does ice melt when placed before a hot fire?" should say *because* it melts!! and this would be wonderful to be sure. Now there is no *effect* without a *cause;* and to answer the question above, as Arminians pretend to, is only adverting to the *effect* to show the *reason* of the effect.—This never will do. It is *no* reason to say that God has given all men powers and faculties, and all may improve them *if they will; this* is readily admitted. And it is readily admitted that all are justly to blame, and condemned before God for *not* improving all their talents and natural powers to God's glory, and that all men might be justly damned forever on this account; but this does not touch the question. *This* is what I admit as well as Arminians. But this does not tell us *why* and *how* it is that one person repents and another does not; nor can the question ever be answered but by admitting that God deals *differently.* Men may flounce and rave, and talk about partiality and a thousand other hideous things, yet after all, this is as evident a truth as any whatever. And this I was obliged to admit. I was not brought to admit that God dealt *unjustly* with any; nor that he bound men to sin against him, although they were ever so willing to serve him; that he *chained* them by his *decrees* so that they could not come to him if they would, and then sent them to hell for it. I say I was not brought to admit *these things*, nor ever expect to be, (unless Satan has more influence over me than I trust God will ever give him,) but I was obliged to admit that God dealt *differently* with men; and this I found Arminians frequently did themselves, although perhaps not conscious of it. About this time I read with great satisfaction the writings of a number of divines who are styled Calvinists, but who no more believed nor

advocated that system, which the *Arminians* had always represented to *me* as the Calvinistic system, than they did the theological notions of Baron Swedenbourg. Undoubtedly the *particular atonement* Calvinists have given the Arminians some occasion to represent this system in the light they have, that is, they have contended that the atonement was not general, that invitations should not be given to all to come to Christ, that men were not only *morally* but *naturally* depraved; that they are like stocks and stones in one sense, &c. But men of talents and reading among the Arminians know that at the present day but very few comparatively speaking who are called Calvinists hold to the foregoing sentiments, and they are just as unfair to impute the sentiments of the *particular atonement* Calvinists to the *general atonement* Calvinists as either of those would be in imputing to Arminians the sentiments of Universalists.

Now, although I had "*gone through*" with the Arminian system and found that there was not "*strength*" enough in it to save my soul; yet, I would by no means consent to what I had always understood to be the Calvinistic system. I saw clearly that the atonement was *general* in its nature, that is, amply sufficient for the *whole world;* or rather it was a way opened, through which all might come to God, '*if* they would.' I was well assured that *invitations* were given in the scriptures to *all indiscriminately*, and that ministers were commanded thus to invite all. I was *sensible*, that I was a *free moral agent*, and that there was no decree of God, nor extrinsic cause which deprived me of this liberty. And I could not consent to a system which taught that God bound men to sin *against their wills*, or rather made them sin, although at the same time, if he had *let them alone*, they would be very likely to serve him! and which compared the Almighty to a man chaining up a servent to a tree, and then telling him if he would come to him he would reward him, and if he would not, he would chastise him; and furthermore, which represented the Almighty as carrying

some souls to heaven just like a man carrying a child altogether against his will, &c. I say, I could not embrace such notions as these, and yet I had always been told that this was a part of the Calvinistic system; and that this system, the Arminian and the Universalists, were all that there were strictly speaking.

Now I have no doubt but that there are tens of thousands that hold on upon the Arminian system, who at the same time see some of its difficulties; yet not knowing, or rather never having clearly seen the bible system of divine truth, and thinking that if they leave Arminianism, they must either embrace Universalism, or fall into the claws and paws of this "*horrible monster*," which they call Calvinism, they choose to stay where they are. I have often heard it urged as an objection to the doctrine of the saints' perseverance, that it is a branch of Calvinism; and I believe that this is the most common objection to it, and frightens many to such a degree, that they dare not take a side glance at it, for fear they shall be forced to go to heaven, whether they are willing or not. But as for me, as I have already stated, I was obliged to admit the truth of that doctrine, and I now saw that the very "corner stone" on which rested the *whole Arminian fabrick*, as entirely destitute of solidity; for notwithstanding the *atonement* was general, the *invitation* general and to all, yet if it was *then left* with the creature, such was the willing obstinacy and voluntary depravity of man, that they would ALL WITH ONE CONSENT MAKE AN EXCUSE, and urge their passage down to hell. ☞This is the truth, reader, and you cannot deny it.

The writers to which I alluded just now, were President Edwards, Bellamy, Fuller, Scott, &c. and I could but be astonished when I saw how that system of Divine truth which *they* advocated, had been hidden from a great part of the Christian world. I did not receive what they stated, without *seeing for myself* that it was true. I had traded sufficiently in that way already, and to my sorrow too; but the fact was, the

general scope of their writings was in vindication and illustration of what had *already* been infused into my mind, and I believe, too, by the unerring Spirit of truth. Nevertheless, their writings were of great and inestimable service to me, in strengthening my mind in what I now consider the great and glorious truths of the gospel. Not that I would unqualifiedly set my seal to all which they have written; but I believe God has made them eminently useful in clearing away much of the rubbish of error and heresy which has long troubled the church. Edwards on the Will I clearly saw swept the Arminian arguments by the board, and demolished every fortress which I had ever seen erected by their ablest writers. The circumstance of my coming into possession of Bellamy's works I could but consider providential and a great mercy. I never had heard but a very little about them, but happening one day to call at a book auction in Providence, there was a set of them exhibited for sale, and no one seemed disposed to take notice of them, as they were religious books. I concluded to bid them off at a venture. I can really say that I consider them some of the most valuable uninspired writings which I have ever met with, and have received much comfort, edification and instruction in perusing them. On the law of God he is to me the most fruitful, clear and profoundly conclusive in his arguments, of any writer which I have ever perused. In observing the title page of his "True Religion delineated," but a short time since, and after I had been in possession of the books several years, I was forcibly struck that the privilege of a perusal of them seemed to be an evident *answer to prayer*. It will be remembered that I observed that years ago I was greatly distressed with the fear of being led away with error and delusion, and as I have already observed, of sitting down into a *dull formal* state on the one hand, or in endeavoring to avoid *that* extreme run into another, viz. *religious enthusiasm or wild fanaticism*. This led me to pray most earnestly and con-

stantly to be led in the *right way*, that I might go to a city of habitation. (See page —.) As I observed when noticing the title page of this work, and finding it to read thus:—"True Religion delineated; or experimental religion as distinguished from *formality* on the *one hand*, and *enthusiasm* on the other, set in a scriptural and rational light. In which some of the principal errors, both of the Arminians and Antinomians, are confuted," &c. I could but notice that it professed to guard the reader against those very extremes which had so much alarmed me, and from which I had so long and fervently prayed to be preserved. I did not notice this until I had owned the book a long time, nor until I was fully established in that system of doctrines which I now consider to be the truth; for notwithstanding it was the title page of the 1st volume, yet the *first* title page in that volume, was the title page to all his works, which consisted of three volumes. So that this which I have mentioned was passed over by me at first without any particular notice. I mention this, because some might be ready to say that I received his writings implicitly, because the *title page* professed, that the book would guide the reader in that "right way" which I had been desiring to walk in, without comparing its contents with the scriptures and the dictates of common sense and reason. The truth was, God by his *word* and *spirit*, drove me out of Arminianism, as I have already shewn; but at the same time I acknowledge that the writers which I have mentioned, were made *instrumental* of helping me much in obtaining correct views of the glorious truths of the gospel. I read, with much satisfaction the account given by Dr. Scott of his exercises, entitled "Truth Advocated," and would heartily recommend it to others. Fuller's "Gospel worthy of all Acceptation," together with his answer to Mr. Bunton; the particular atonement Calvinist on the one hand, and Philanthropis (alias D. Taylor) the Arminian, on the other, were peculiarly interesting and instructive. I could wish that this work, which constitutes the first volume of the edition of his works lately

published in this country, was more generally read, particularly by Arminians and "particular atonement Calvinists." It is a masterly work, and I think near the truth. Arminians, if they were to read it, would see that it advocates a system *essentially different* from what they have generally conceived the Calvinistic system to be, and yet Mr. Fuller calls himself a Calvinist.

But to return: after I found that it was impossible to answer the question alluded to in the foregoing, agreeably with Arminian principles, I was obliged to admit, as I have before observed, that God dealt *differently* with men, and own that it was owing to his *sovereign efficacious grace* in changing the hearts of some, in consequence of which they come to Christ; while others were left to themselves, to follow the imaginations of their *own hearts* (not forced *contrary* to their own hearts) down to ruin. To admit this, was like "*halter breaking a young colt.*" I kicked and flounced, but yet truth would bring me up; for it was a plain matter of fact that it was so. ☞*It was the truth and I could not deny it.* It was not long neither before I found that the Arminians, in brow-beating this subject, and striving to argue it away, admitted the *very thing* which they were writing down and preaching down as most horrible partiality, &c.

For instance, in order to argue away any difference of dealing in respect to individuals, which is generally inferred from Paul's Epistle to the Romans, they contend that all the difference which is meant by the Epistle consists in "*national privileges*" and has no reference to individuals. I was almost angry with myself, to think that I was such a downright novice, or so blinded by hatred to the truth, and a determination to maintain Arminianism at all events, that I did not before this time see that this did not *alter the case one whit.* For who that can see one *inch from his nose*, (as the proverb is,) cannot see that *national privileges* are also *individual privileges.* And the question immediately arose thus: are there any more saved in a

nation in consequence of their having the gospel preached, the bible to read, and all the means of grace, than there would be if they were destitute of all these privileges? Why, the Arminians would be ready to say yes, or else the bible, preaching, and means of grace could not be considered national blessings. So that I saw *they* admitted the *same difference of dealing*, which I was obliged to admit, although they were constantly reprobating the idea as the doctrine of the devil. Now, notwithstanding I saw plainly, that, although a nation might have all the privileges which I have mentioned, yet if God did not attend these means by his grace, they would still all go down to hell, yet, that he did in *this respect* deal differently with nations, I saw was a plain matter of fact.

He dealt differently with those who heard the preaching of Peter, and were pricked in the heart on the day of pentecost, from what he did, with the same number ages before. He dealt differently with *Gentiles after the crucifixion* of Christ from what he did *before*. And he deals *differently* with Gentile nations now. for *some* have the *bible*, the *preaching of the gospel*, the *out-pouring* of the Spirit in copious effusions and all the means of grace; while *others* never saw a bible—never heard the gospel preached, nor ever enjoyed the means of grace. Arminians will say, well, they are not accountable for privileges which they do not enjoy, and of course they will not sink so low in hell as those among *us* who enjoy these great privileges, and abuse them. I grant it. But you will admit that without holiness no man shall see the Lord, and you will admit according to the doctrine of Paul, that they are without excuse for sin; and you will *furthermore* admit that more, yea, tens of thousands more are saved in a nation in *consequence* of having the gospel, than there would be if they had it not; or else if these are no more likely to be saved with the bible, preaching, &c. than without them, why send them the bible, why preach the gospel to every creature?

Now here is the same difference of dealing against which you so much rail; it comes down to individuals at last. A late writer in the Christian Advocate and Journal & Zion's Herald, the Methodist paper in New York, and the leading Arminian paper in the United States, and perhaps in the world, (for I believe it has some twenty or thirty thousand subscribers,) most fully and unequivocally admits this difference of dealing. I will here transcribe a paragraph from his writings, with some thoughts on the same, which I penned down at the time, and I beg the reader's close attention. This writer had been advocating the hypothesis that some of the heathen would be saved or might be saved without gospel privileges, or rather without the written word, preaching, means of grace, &c. In stating the objections which he conceived might be alleged against his notions, among others he states the following *one*, and attempts an answer to it.

"It is objected (he says) against the possibility of a "heathen salvation, that if it is possible for a heathen "to be saved who is destitute of the instructions of the "scriptures and ignorant of Christ, then there is no "need for Christians to make any effort to send the "scriptures or missionaries among them." "That it is "possible (he says) I think has been made clearly to ap- "pear, but it does not therefore follow that there is no "occasion for missionary efforts, or that Christians "need not send the scriptures among them, *for the* "*good reason*, that if the scriptures and missionaries "be sent among them, MANY MORE *will be saved* "*than would be otherwise.*" "Now in order (he says) "to make this clear to every one's understanding, sup- "pose a great multitude of our fellow beings were "wandering in a deep and extensive forest; the night "had spread her sable mantle around them, and the "forest abounded with ferocious beasts of prey. They "have nothing to direct their steps toward their "home but the rays of the half formed moon, which "now and then appears from behind an intervening "cloud, or here and there in the high vault of heaven

" it may be a twinkling star shoots its glimmering " light athwart their dismal gloom. By these feeble " means which their merciful Creator has graciously " hung out to them, and by which he has been pleased " in some measure to enlighten them, we may suppose " it *possible*, at least, for them to find their home, and " no doubt here and there ONE who should be very " careful to improve the light, would find his way " through gloomy forests and howling beasts of prey " to his much desired home; but it would by no means " follow that the sun would be of no use, or that the " services of a *guide* who was well acquainted with " the way, would be labour altogether lost. No— " surely no! Increase their light and you of course *in-* " *crease the probability* of their deliverance; send them " a *guide* to point their wandering steps in the right " way and to persuade them to walk there, and it is " probable that *many* (mark) who would *otherwise* per- " ish with hunger or be devoured by wild beasts of " prey, would safely reach their much desired and " happy home." "It is thus (he says) I view the " condition of the ancient and modern heathen world. " Light has indeed come upon them. They inhabit " the desolate places of the earth, where moral dark- " ness reigns; but through the interposition of Divine " mercy, or for the sake of him who is a Mediator be- " tween God and man, a ray of heavenly light darts " forth amid the dismal gloom. It is true the *direct* " beams of the sun of righteousness which Christians " enjoy, do not shine upon their path; yet they are " enlightened by rays that originate from the sun, and " I doubt not but among the many who shall come " from the east and from the west, from the north " and from the south, and sit down with Abraham, " Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, it will be " found that many from heathen lands will be gather- " ed in and be saved." (See Vol. 3, No. 10, of Chris- tian Advocate and Journal and Zion's Herald.)

This is copied "*verbatim et literatim*," and I will now as observed, transcribe *some* of the remarks which

I made in a common place book at the time I first read it, as follows: This is Arminian language; and much of it is undoubtedly at variance with *reason* and the *bible*, yet as in all cases those who undertake to advocate error, are obliged to tell *some truth*, in order to maintain the least shadow of plausibility—so with the writer before us. In this short paragraph he has advanced (unwittingly, undoubtedly) the fundamental principles of my Calvinism, and I am called a pretty strong one too. And this circumstance is not confined to this writer neither; I have often observed Arminian writers while vehemently writing and declaiming against the horrid doctrine of Calvinism, affording ample testimony in the course of their remarks in its support; at least all the Calvinism which I feel concerned to vindicate, and I agree generally (although perhaps not in every particular) with Edwards, Bellamy, Fuller, Scott, and that class of writers.

In the first place, I would observe that this writer (yes this Arminian writer) teaches what he undoubtedly would term, when advanced by Calvinists, "*the horrible doctrine of the sovereignty of God in dealing differently with men in respect to their eternal state.*" Or to speak more intelligibly, if possible, he advocates the doctrine that God does *more for some* than for *others*, in effecting the salvation of their souls.

Observe in answering the question "that if the heathen may be saved without the Bible, then there is no need of sending it nor missionaries to them," &c. he argues that the objection is groundless "for this good reason, that if the scriptures and missionaries be sent among them, *many more will be saved than otherwise.*" Now there are some nations *who have the scriptures and all the means of grace*, and according to this writer, more are saved out of such nations, *in consequence* of having these gospel privileges, than are saved out of the heathen nations who are *deprived* of them. And that when these heathen nations shall have the scriptures, the preaching of the word, and the means of grace among them, more, yea *many more*

will be saved *in consequence* of these blessings, than *have been* saved out of the *same nations* when deprived of those means.

Now for the sake of illustration, I wish to assume for a moment the place of an Arminian, raising his objections and declaiming against the very same idea, (that is, that God deals differently with men,) when advanced by Calvinists. And to proceed, I should talk thus:—"Here is *partiality*—awful, blasphemous doctrine; when the bible expressly declares that God is *no respecter of persons.* Is it possible that God is ever such a respecter of persons as to save one man and leave another to perish, who had just as good a *claim* upon the divine mercy? Yet this writer asserts in plain terms that he does.

There are many individuals saved, who have the scriptures and the preaching of the gospel among them, when many individuals are lost among the heathen, for *lack* of these blessings: and these same souls, which are eternally *lost*, would have been eternally *saved*, if God had dealt with them as he did with the others who were saved. Horrible blasphemy!! A thousand times worse than Universalism. How can any reasonable man sit under such preaching. *I* believe that God is impartial. I believe in a *free salvation;* but this writer advocates a notion that is enough to make a *good man* turn pale, viz. that God freely gives eternal salvation to some (for this is the consequence) while he leaves others *justly* to perish in their sins. What a stain upon the moral character of God, who gave his Son to die for *all men.*—Besides, here is reprobation; enough to make the ears of a Christian tingle.—O *tell* it not in Gath, as Mr. Wesley says.—Here are souls perishing eternally for *lack* of what God *gives* to others. He *excludes* them from the means which if they had in common with others, they would be saved. Does he not say so? Does he not say that if the scriptures and missionaries were sent among them, *many more would be saved than otherwise*—and yet it has been otherwise for nearly two thousand

years, with some nations, since the birth of Christ; while some have and do still enjoy the gospel. O this Arminian Free Will writer—how he advocates wicked partiality. Are not God's ways equal?—I would ask this writer if a heathen can help being born in a heathen land—or if it was owing to grace *already received* and *improved*, that he, (this Arminian) was born in a Christian land, where, according to *his own doctrine*, many more will be saved, than out of heathen lands. O why do Arminians teach the horrible doctrine of reprobation? While some "men enjoy the light of the "*meridian sun*" with a "good "*guide*" to direct them to a happy home, "others are *reprobated* from these privileges, and "have afforded them only the "*rays of the half* "*formed moon, which now and then appears from be-* "*hind an intervening cloud, or here and there in the* "*high vault of heaven, it may be a glimmering light* "*athwart their dismal gloom.*" And by reprobating them from this glorious light of the sun (the scriptures) and offices of the *guide*, many are reprobated from heaven; for many if they *had enjoyed* these means would have been saved that OTHERWISE are lost. So it comes to the same thing, as Mr. Wesley says.

O this horrible Arminian doctrine of reprobation! nobody can conceive how many Universalists it has made, nor what a stain it fixes upon the moral character of God, who sent his Son to die for all (A L L don't spell part) and not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. Besides, this Arminian Free Willer teaches personal or particular election, and I never could so much as bear to hear it *mentioned*, much more advocated, as he advocates it. There are, according to his own statement, INDIVIDUALS chosen to eternal life, in preference to others; and this writer cannot deny it. Mark now his doctrine is; *that* many more will be saved for having the scriptures and missionaries sent to them.—But the time long has been, even for thousands of

years, that a great portion of the world have not had the scriptures; nay, have not even heard of them, yet some few favoured nations have had them, and God most certainly CHOSE that THESE should have the scriptures, and that THOSE should not have them, and in *consequence* of *his choosing* that these should have the scriptures, many, yea millions perhaps have been saved, while millions among the heathens in every age have been eternally lost, *who would have been saved*, according to this Arminian writer (this Methodist or Free Will writer) if they had been dealt with as the others were. Now here is particular election with a witness to it, and the whole army of Arminian theologians in the four quarters of the globe cannot get clear of the conclusion. I ask, what is this but *choosing* some to eternal life, in *preference* to others, and without any regard to *works of the creature*, too, as a *ground* for this choice? For can a man help being born in a Christian land? And is it on account of *previous good works* that we are born in a Christian land? O no; here is the horrible doctrine that is so intolerable that a man or a *good old woman* can hardly have patience to hear it mentioned! This is the doctrine that drives so many to despair. *I* believe in a free salvation—*I* believe that God's ways are equal—*I* believe that God takes no pleasure in the death of the sinner—*I* believe that whosoever will come, may come. But as for these Arminians, Methodists, Free Willers, &c. &c they teach personal particular election, and more "eternal election;" for as Dr. Adam Clarke, Mr. Wesley, Mr. Fletcher, and many other principal Arminian writers say, and indeed every other man of sense must say the same, past, present and future are with the eternal, omniscient God, one eternal NOW. Of course what he does now was present in his view long before he created man—and what he *does now*, it must be he always *determined* to do from eternity. For if God does a thing, there can be no inconsistency nor unrighteousness in his *previously de-*

termining to do it, and especially in the case before us, where Arminians must own that the determination of God does not depend on the determination of the creature, as they very often make it, but this work or determination of God relates exclusively to bringing men into existence in one part of the world and another. Now surely God determined the work before the creature was born, and executed it in bringing some into existence in Christian countries and some in heathen lands. Now here as Mr. Wesley says, is the "*horrible decree*" with all of its concomitant horrors of horrors. O, will not these heathens who are lost, who *would have been saved* if they had enjoyed the *privilege* with those who *are saved*, begin to reproach their Maker as the author of all their calamities? will they not call him a partial being, and most blasphemously say that such a being is an "inexorable tyrant," as the Arminian writers generally represent the character of a being who could do as the Calvinists say God does, viz. deal *differently* with men, although he deals unjustly by none?—precisely what they say themselves, what I have shewn that this writer says, and what all others of note among them, whose writings I have ever perused say—although not directly in the use of the same words, yet it amounts to the *same thing*, and ☞they cannot deny it. Now in the foregoing remarks I have assumed the place of an Arminian and have expressed something of the same language which they use, (although not to the same extent which they go, for it almost makes my blood run cold even to repeat what I have for the sake of illustration) when the *same ideas* are advanced by us. This must appear plain to any and all who will take the trouble to read this short extract which I have made from the Christian Advocate; nor is this a solitary instance neither, as I have before observed all these writers abound in the same absurdities of advancing and supporting an idea which they pretend to hate; and all their labour to show that the sovereignty of God argued and defended by the apostle Paul in many of his Epistles, in be-

stowing favours on some, which he withholds from others, has reference only to nations, if we *admit it*, it alters not the thing in the least, as I have already shown by considering this extract from the Christian Advocate. It may serve to keep the subject *out of sight* from some who look and examine no further than just what their teachers and writers tell them: but men of ordinary capacity who mean to *think for themselves* will readily see that *national privileges* affect the *individuals* who compose that nation, or rather that a nation is made up of individuals. Arminians then, when they cavil as they do, when we say God deals differently with men, condemn themselves, and they cannot deny it. This I saw, and could not but abhor myself for speaking on the subject as I formerly had done, and still can but be astonished at others who appear to be men of talents, declaiming from the pulpit and the press against that which they are *obliged to allow*. But some may say, although the Arminians may be obliged to allow that God *deals differently* with men, does more for some than he does for others, in consequence of which, some are not saved which would have been if they had been dealt with as others were, yet they hold that all *might be saved*, if they would, and if any are not it is their own fault. And who does not admit this? The general atonement Calvinists admit it, and it can be nothing short of *wilful misrepresentation* for those who are acquainted with their writings or sentiments to assert to the contrary; and those who do not know any thing about their sentiments most certainly ought not to affirm what they do not *know*. But to this point presently.

And to return—I not only saw that the question, "why does one sinner repent and believe the gospel and is saved, while another freely and voluntarily refuses offered mercy and urges his way down to ruin, could not be answered agreeably with Arminian sentiments, but must be resolved into the sovereign grace of God in dealing *differently* with men; and that this difference of

dealing was maintained, (although more covertly, obscurely, and in a way of circumlocution,) by Arminians themselves, but I found that the bible was full of proof on the subject. And if our blessed Lord ever taught any thing clearly, he most clearly, unequivocally, and without the least reserve taught it in the parable of the supper. "Then said he unto them a certain man made a great supper and bade many. And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused. And another said I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came and showed his Lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servants, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city and *bring in* hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded and yet there is room. And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you none of those men who were bidden shall taste of my supper.—*Luke* xiv, 16, 24. Now the question is, did our Saviour *mean* any thing by this parable or not. Every one will be ready to say that he meant *something* for it would be blasphemous to say that our blessed Lord was engaged in idle talk and vain jangling. What does the supper mean? All admit it represents the gospel. The next question is, does our blessed Lord teach by this parable, that he *deals differently* with those unto whom the news of the preparation of this feast or gospel supper comes, or not.

Now I think it falls but little short of "horrible blasphemy" (as the Arminians say,) to say that he does not. The first class were informed that the supper was ready—and they were *invited* to come; but they were

united perfectly in making excuses that they *could not come;* and the reason why they *could not* come was not because of any lack in the provision which was made, nor in the offer of him who made the feast, nor nothing out of themselves. They *loved other things* so well they could not come; and this *could not*, was nothing more nor less than a "*would not.*" Observe what the one says who had married a wife—"therefore I cannot come." Why, sir, cannot you come? because you have no legs to walk, or no *natural* powers to obey? No such thing—but because I had *rather* stay at home with my wife; that is my *choice.* I *hate* the man who made the supper, and the *supper too;* but I *love sensual pleasures;* therefore I cannot come. Was this man to be blamed or not? and was the man who invited him justifiable in letting him alone and not "*bringing*" him to the feast, or not? Now this is the question (and I shall consider it more largely presently.) This is a complete representation of all sinners to whom the gospel comes.—They all with ONE CONSENT (observe they "will it," or choose, or consent) make excuse. But observe, the master commands him to *bring in some*, and to compel (which amounts precisely to the same thing) some, that his house may be filled. And if here is not a *difference of dealing*, I confess that I am utterly unable to tell what a difference of dealing is. There never was any thing plainer, written or spoken under heaven, in the bible, nor any other book. I ask you, reader, if there is no difference in asking or inviting a person to come into your house, who is totally opposed to coming in, and *bringing* him in, or *compelling* him to come in? Let candor answer—throw away your prejudices and answer the question; and if you do, you must admit that there is a great difference. And I ask you if this is not the *very fact* which is taught in this parable? And now give Jesus Christ the lie and trample his solemn words under your feet, or give up Arminianism? For nothing, as I have before stated, was ever plainer. Yet notwithstanding this, Arminians strive to argue it away. They say this compelling does not mean forcing the

creature *contrary to his will,* like tying a man's legs and hands and then dragging him into the house from the streets? Who says it does? I say no such thing. I believe that when the sinner comes to Christ, he comes *as willingly* as ever he sinned against him. But how does this alter the case? Not one whit. It is nothing but an evasion, and keeping the truth out of sight. The question was, and still is, and always will be, was there not a difference of dealing? and did the bringing them in, and compelling them in, let it consist in what it would, ANSWER THE PURPOSE IN GETTING THEM INTO THE HOUSE; AND WOULD NOT THE OTHERS WHO MADE AN EXCUSE AND WERE LEFT, BEEN IN THE HOUSE IF THEY HAD BEEN BROUGHT IN OR COMPELLED IN? Now here is a place that the Arminians find in their road that they never can get over, round, through, nor under. I do not hesitate to say that it completely stops them—hedges them up—and spoils their system. And it is not unfrequently the case with them, that instead of trying to answer the above questions, or deny *this difference* of dealing, that they will begin to declaim and rail against this truth, and vindicate the cause of those who were first bidden, and who *all with one consent* made an excuse and were left to themselves, and turn to and declare that they are not to blame!!! O horrible of horribles! horrible of horribles! Not to blame? And why? Look at them; look at the feast prepared before them; hear the invitation given to them, and see what *the reason* was that they did not come, and then justify them if you dare! Pray tell us, had they not legs to come? And might they not come if they would? But here is partiality you say; no more than every Arminian is obliged to admit, as I have already shewn in the case of the writer from the Christian Advocate & Journal. There is a difference of dealing, and they are obliged to admit the same. Not but that all who were bidden might have come *if they would?* But they *could not* because they *would not.* And I hope in future to find better business

than justifying them for not coming; or condemning God for dealing differently with others.

But to proceed, I now obtained a different view from what I had hitherto entertained of the *moral depravity* of the unregenerate, or of the reason of their not serving God and coming to Christ. The Arminian idea of the depravity of man since the fall, as I understand it, was "that man *could* not do any thing acceptable to God if *he would*—that it would be as inconsistent for God to command or exhort them to come to Christ without *giving them grace to assist* them to come, as it would be to chain a man up to a tree, and then command him to come when he was utterly unable, although ever so willing. They accordingly represent that God has given to all men indiscriminately, a measure of grace, in order to enable them to come to Christ. I found also that the particular atonement Calvinists, or many of them at least, entertained the same views of depravity with Arminians, although they differed widely from them in respect to all mankind's having *some saving grace.* That these are the Arminian ideas in respect to the depravity of man, I will here shew, by presenting a few extracts out of the many which might be made from some of their most respectable writers.

Thus Dr. Clark—"The plain state of the case (he says) is this; the soul is so completely fallen that it HAS NO POWER to do good until it receive that power from on high. But it has power to *see* good; to distinguish between that and evil; to acknowledge the excellence of this good and *evil* (self-contradiction) from a conviction of that excellence, but *farther* it cannot go."

And again, the Methodist discipline says, "We believe that the moment Adam fell he had *no freedom of will* left, but that God when of his own free grace he gave the promise of a Saviour to him and his posterity, graciously restored to mankind a liberty and power to accept of offered salvation."

The Rev. Laurence Kean, says—"The sufficiency of divine grace, as afforded to all, must render unbelief and impenitency inexcusable; as not proceed-

ing from want of power but from free and stubborn choice. Without this divine help, the revelation of the gospel, though never so clear, would signify nothing; *all precepts and directions relative to an upright conduct, and even the most vehement persuasions to obedience,* COULD HAVE NO FORCE IN THEM. For what would it signify to direct the dead, or to speak to the deaf." And very much more he says to the same amount. But I need transcribe no more, to shew that these writers, (and all others of the same sentiment, which I have ever consulted) agree with them on this subject. I say, I need transcribe no more to shew that according to Arminians, "The DEPRAVITY OF MAN EXCUSES HIM from serving God or coming to Christ. For they declare that if God does not in the first place give grace to sinners, "all precepts and directions relative to an upright conduct, and even the most vehement persuasions to obedience, *could have no force in them.*" Now this notion of depravity I saw to be as far from truth, as heaven from hell, or light from total darkness.

In the first place, let it be remembered that the moral depravity of man robs him of no *natural power*—he has all the power to serve God which the saints possess, EXCEPTING A DISPOSITION OR INCLINATION—or, to reduce it to as plain a statement as possible, their depravity consists in "hating God," whereas holiness consists in loving God. As the scriptures say "The carnal mind is enmity to God," and again, "love is the fulfilling of the law."

Now these are very plain questions, "Is a man to blame for hating God, or is he not?" And may God with propriety command and exhort a man who does hate him with all his heart, to love him with all his heart, or not? *This* will settle the controversy. If men and devils are *not to blame* and do not deserve to be damned for hating God *previous* to grace or gracious helps being given them, then I affirm that there is no sin nor sinners on earth nor in hell. But if they *are* to blame for not loving but hating God and justly

exposed to eternal death on that account, *anticedent* to the offer of Christ or of grace given them, then does the Arminian notion of depravity and all their declamation against our ideas (stating that we represent God as requiring the creature to do that which he has never given him ability to perform) fall under the weight of their own absurdities.

I have already shewn (see pages 108, 109,) the utter inconsistency and profound folly of maintaining *such* an hypothesis, that men's depravity excused them from keeping the law of God; but I will continue these remarks a little further, as I consider this an important point to understand, in order to our obtaining correct views of the doctrines of the gospel. I ask the advocates of that system, if men's depravity excuse them from being required to serve God, or in other words, to keep the law, what need is there of grace to save them? surely, they cannot be to *blame;* and will God ever damn a soul who has not been to *blame?* No; God forbid. Well then, it is clear by this rule, that Jesus Christ need never to have come into the world, as I have before said; the *depravity* or *wickedness* of men would have saved them! And the more depraved and wicked, the less to blame! horrible conclusion is this; yet, that it is a *fair conclusion* from their premises they cannot deny. For when we tell them that those who were first bidden to the feast, were so *desperately wicked,* and totally opposed and settled in their hatred and enmity to God, that they *would not come* to the feast, and that their state and refusal is but an epitome of the state of all mankind before regeneration; and also that all mankind *with one consent* will certainly and infallibly refuse to come to Christ, if God do not interpose and change their hearts, and *cause* them to be willing to accept of Christ as offered in the gospel; I say when we tell them this, they cry out, Well, they are not to blame then? Why does not God change their hearts? or some other language alike awful and, I was about to say, blasphemous. I cannot say *much less* of it, for it justifies, in fact, all the sin in the universe; although I charitably hope that

many who thus express themselves, do not see the consequences of their system. What is a man to blame for, if he is not to blame for a *bad heart;* or which is the same thing, a bad disposition, as we sometimes term it, or which is the same thing, hating God and every thing which is good, lovely, or holy?

Suppose, reader, for instance, that you call to mind one of the most amiable, holy, virtuous and benevolent persons within the circle of your acquaintance, and at the same time another person, envying, persecuting, and cruelly injuring him all the days of his life, and that too, without the *least provocation*, and suppose again you should call the wicked wretch to an account for his conduct, and ask him why he thus treated that innocent good man, and he should answer you thus? Sir, I have got such a *bad dispôsition, or heart*, that I feel altogether disposed to hate every body that is good, and I *cannot help* hating and persecuting him with all the powers I possess? Do you think his answer would be a justifiable reason for his conduct?—No; you say out of his own mouth I would condemn him—his *inability* to love the good man, *constitutes his blame*; and for which he ought to be condemned. Precisely so with depraved sinners, *their inability* to serve God *constitutes their blame*, it being a *moral* and not a *natural inability;* for mark it, *the sum total* of their inability is their *voluntary* hatred, or opposition to God, and to say that this excuses them, is to excuse all the sin and wickedness in the universe. It excuses the devil; for he might plead the *same inability*. It would excuse the Jews for hating, persecuting and crucifying the Lord of life and glory. It would excuse the wretch, who, to gratify his lust for riches, oppresses the poor widow, and robs the orphan of bread. It would excuse the man, reader, who has injured *you;* and you are guilty of *self-contradiction*, to blame him, even if he has followed you with the most cruel treatment, without the least provocation, for years, and at the same time to say that fallen sinners are not to blame, and do not deserve (anticedent to grace given them) to be damned for not loving and serving God.

Or do you think the ever blessed God is less deserving of a person's love than yourself? How soon are *you* stirred up and provoked when men injure *you*—when they slander you—when they wrong you out of your just due. How plain you *see* their blame; and for them to come to you and tell you that they have a *bad heart*, and consequently *love to injure* you, will only confirm you in the opinion that they *deserve the penalty of the law*. Yet depraved sinners freely and voluntarily hate God—break his law, disregard all his precepts; take his name in vain; never thank him for mercies; never call on him to forgive their sins; improve the blessings which he confers upon them in *dishonoring* his name; kill his prophets; stone his servants, and draw the heart's blood of his *own Son*—and in *such a case* they are not to blame except God give them grace!!! O horrible conclusion. Who will stand up for God—who will vindicate *his cause*, even to the condemnation of *themselves*, and a guilty world besides?

Observe what the Arminians say—"Without this Divine help (that is, grace given them) the revelation of the gospel though never so clear, would signify nothing. *All precepts and directions relative to an upright conduct, and even the most vehement persuasions to obedience* COULD HAVE NO FORCE IN THEM." As I before said, if this be true, there is no sin in the universe. If, because men are totally and entirely opposed to God, there can be no force in a precept compelling him to love HIM, there is no law to guilty sinful sinners and devils—and the scriptures affirm, where there is no law there is no transgression. And again, sin is the transgression of the law; and consequently it is plain, according to the Arminian notion of depravity (*or that there is NO FORCE in precepts to fallen man to be holy, upright, &c. without grace being first given them,*) that fallen and depraved men are not sinners at all, and most certainly do not need a Saviour. These are the consequences of the system, and let them deny it *if they can.*

Dr. Clark says, "the plain state of the case is this; the soul is so completely fallen that it has *no power to do good* until it receives power from on high."

Now the truth is, these definitions of depravity or of the fallen state of man, by Arminians, forever carry to the mind this idea, that man, in consequence of the fallen state which he is in, has lost some natural power or faculty of the soul which the law of God still demands that he should improve; or at least, that his *natural faculties* have become weakened or debilitated, and of course incapacitated to perform their full amount of labour, and yet the original law requires the full amount, and of course the reasonableness of assistance being given in order justly to require the work. Now if these premises were true, most certainly the conclusions would be correct. For, to be sure, it would be unreasonable for God to require a man to use two arms when he never gave him but one, or to use legs, when he never gave him any; or to exercise judgment which he never gave him; or reason, or conscience, or memory. But the fact is, there is not a word of truth, common sense, reason nor scripture in the premises.

The moral law of God *never* required the exercise of any of these faculties which the creature did not possess; nor does the fallen sinful state of man, or his inability to serve God, or, as Dr. Clark says, "his having no power to do good," consist at all in the loss of any of these powers, or in their being weakened or debilitated. A man may serve God just as acceptably who has weak natural powers, as the one who has strong ones. This is evident to the common sense of mankind. Why this talk about the man's having no *power* to do good, and that it would be unreasonable for God, in his fallen state, to require him to do good without first giving him grace. All the purpose such talk serves is, just to keep the *true state of the case out of sight.* All the power that man, in his fallen state, lacks to do good—to keep the law of God—to come to Christ, is precisely this, reader—and what, you say? This is important, let us have it. Well, it is just what I have told you before, but it is of great importance, and I wish you to remember it. I say, then, that all the power that man, in his fallen state, lacks to serve God, keep his law, come to Christ, &c.

is the *want of love* to God; or in other words, all the reason why he *cannot* do these things, is because he hates God. And as I have already shewn, if he be not to blame for hating God, or not loving him, then he is not a sinner and so needs not grace or a Saviour. And why not let these "justified people alone?" their *fallen state* will be the means of their salvation!!!

Now I trust that the absurdities, inconsistencies, self-contradictions, contradictions to the bible, of this notion of depravity are clearly seen by the reader, if he is not so PREJUDICED against the truth that he CANNOT see; and if he *is*, his INABILITY to see, so far from excusing him, constitutes his blame!!

Thus I was brought to correct views of the depravity of man—that his inability to serve God was a *moral* and not a *natural* inability. And furthermore, I was convinced that it is utterly impossible for a person ever to understand the doctrines of the gospel *clearly* without making this distinction between *moral* and *natural* ability—between the servant who has *no hands* or tools to work, although willing, and the one who is so *lazy* he *will not* work. And although it would be as utterly impossible to prevail on the latter to work as the former, yet while the *former* would be *excusable* the latter would be *justly blameable* and exposed to punishment. ☞This is the truth, and you cannot deny it.

Suppose you had such a servant, robust, healthy, and able to do a good day's work, and you order him to work in the morning, and in the evening find he has done nothing, and you ask the reason why—"I am so *lazy*, sir, (says he,) I *cannot work*." What would you say? Very likely you would call him a lazy *rascal*, and tell him if he would not work he should not eat, and that it would be *quite just* for him to starve to death." Now this is plain to the common sense of all. And this is the true state of sinners. And they are justly condemned—but still God offers them mercy, exhorts them, invites, all the day long stretches out his arm to them, but they ALL WITH ONE CONSENT MAKE AN EXCUSE. Nor can they throw

their guilt upon Adam. God does not condemn them for Adam's sin, although it is admitted there is a certain connexion between Adam's first sin, and the moral depravity of his posterity. But it is not admitted that there is *such* a connexion as this—"*that any man in the judgment will be condemned to hell for Adam's personal sin.*" Sinners since the fall, are condemned for their own sins. Their hearts, so far as blameworthiness is concerned, consists in affections or a disposition, or perhaps to speak as correctly, in volition or voluntary exercises. The heart of the sinner does not consist in "*a great lump*" of something, as many seem to suppose, handed down to him from from his progenitors, and placed inside of him, and remaining there without his consent—a "*dormant lump of wickedness.*"—No; but his heart is his affections, or his exercises; and of course, his heart is *his own;* and if he would *only love God*, instead of *hating him*, he would have a *good heart* instead of a *bad one.* This is truth, plain truth and simple truth—any one that can see that two and two make four, it seems to me cannot but see it; consequently all the talk of sinners, in order to justify themselves, by trying to throw the guilt upon Adam, or by asking the question who gave me this heart, &c. is only adding dreadful iniquity to sin. Their bad heart consists in hating God, and if they do not *wish* or *choose* to hate him, why don't they love him. Is he not worthy of their love? Their excuses are precisely like persons being in a room, murmuring, complaining, and finding fault with their situation, railing against some one as the *author* of their troubles, and being in such a disagreable situation, while at the same time the door stands wide open—liberty for them to walk out "*if they will*" into a most superb palace, yea, earnest invitations, with an offer of great reward if they will come out; and nothing in the room where they are—nor in the palace to which they are invited, nor any where else in heaven, nor earth, nor under the earth, to prevent them from coming out, *only the love and attachment to the room where they are, and about which*

they are complaining and where they freely choose to stay!! Now how does this look? Yet this is a true delineation of the case. And will God's people rise up; yea, God's ministers and justify this murmuring? God forbid. Notwithstanding this subject in respect to moral depravity is so plain, so simple and easy to be understood, yet I found there were but few that seemed willing to understand it. Men will turn and shift almost any way before they will see and admit it. And I expect one reason is, because it brings the blame where it should rest, viz. on the sinner, and completely clears the throne of God. And this to the unsanctified affections is most intolerably disagreeable. But whether we will hear or forbear, this is the true state of the case. Men are so totally opposed to God and their hearts so fully set in them to do evil, that they will not serve God nor come to Christ. And it is also as true that he does leave some to go their *own* way—to follow the imaginations of their *own* hearts—to walk in their *own* ways, and to be filled with their *own* ways, and justly to perish in their own sins—and let them condemn God in this who dare. It is a self-evident fact as it is that he interposes the arm of his grace, mercy and power, and for his own sake, for his own glory, as a reward to his Son, and for the *general good* of the universe, saves many with an everlasting salvation.

And reader if you are an Arminian, before you turn away from this with disgust and condemn such conduct as *wicked partiality* and injustice—remember by doing so you are throwing dirt in *your own eyes*—condemning this difference of dealing when at the same time you admit it to be a fact, as I have already shewn in respect to the writer in the Christian Advocate and Journal, and which very ideas are admitted, advanced, and clearly taught by all Arminian writers of note which I have ever consulted, and the consequences are the same, amount to the same thing—dealing differently, by saving some and leaving others to perish *for their dreadful wickedness and sins.*

☞This is the truth and I challenge you to deny it.

And furthermore, I not only saw that if any were saved, it would not do to refer it, or the cause of it to the creature, and that on this principle not one would ever be saved or accept of salvation, but that it must be resolved into the sovereign efficacious grace of God in changing their hearts, and thus causing them to be willing to come to Christ; but I also saw that this very idea was taught by the principal Arminian writers themselves, whom I consulted, although in plain explicit contradiction to what at other times they advanced. For instance, in Dr. Clark's Commentary on Revelations, 22d chap. 14th verse: "Blessed are they who do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." The Dr. observes, on that part of the verse, "that they may have a right to the tree of life;" that the original is much more expressive, giving the original Greek words, and then his own translation, "*that they may have authority over the tree of life.*" An authority (says the Dr.) founded on *right;* this *right* founded on obedience to the commandments of God; and that *obedience* PRODUCED BY THE GRACE OF GOD WORKING IN THEM. Without *grace*, no *obedience;* without *obedience*, no *authority* to the tree of life; without *authority*, no *right;* without *right*, no *enjoyment;* GOD'S GRACE THROUGH CHRIST PRODUCES THE GOOD; AND THEN REWARDS IT AS IF ALL HAD BEEN OUR OWN.

Thus saith the Dr.—and now let me ask the reader what *I say* in respect to God's being the *efficient cause* of our turning to God, more than the Dr. Why don't the Arminians charge the Dr. as representing that God compels some men to go to heaven whether they are willing or not? Does he not say that the obedience of the saints is "produced" by the grace of God working in them? And what do we say more? Let it be shewn. Nor is this a solitary instance of the Dr's neither. I could fill a volume by transcribing from him and other leading Arminian writers, passages of the same import.

Now, after all this, they most strenuously contend that the turning point of salvation with those who are saved is this, "*they* improve the grace given them," while others do not. Not, they say, that God deals *differently* in more effectually or powerfully operating upon their hearts; but *they*, that is of *themselves*, improve the grace given them better; for this must be the consequence of their notions, viz. that the unholy, wicked, unsanctified heart of one sinner, which they acknowledge is desperately wicked and altogether opposed to God, improves the grace of God committed to the man, or seed of Divine grace, or gracious assistance, (sometimes they use one expression and sometimes another;) while the unholy, unsanctified and desperately wicked heart of another sinner, rejects this grace committed to him, or this divine light, gracious assistance, &c. So that it appears according to this hypothesis that the unholy, desperately wicked heart of a man is the author of a most invaluable work, viz. of *improving* the grace of God to the salvation of the soul!!! No, but they will say, not the heart of man in its unsanctified state alone, but by the assistance which God gives it. But I deny this—for I ask, does not the one who rejects have the *same* assistance, the *same* grace committed to him, the *same Divine light*, and rejects these helps? That is, his unholy and wicked heart rejects these gracious helps, while another, whose heart is alike wicked and unsanctified, falls in with this assistance! So that the falling in, acquiescing, or striving with this grace, must be something *besides* this grace or *Divine help*—of course it must be the man; and as the heart is the seat and only seat of moral exercises, it must be the heart, so it comes to this; and, reader, ☞you cannot deny it.

I say it comes to this, according to the Arminian theory; that the heart of man, which the bible affirms is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, performs an invaluable work in the salvation of those who are saved; and according to this theory, or if their premises are true, might justly divide the glory with Jesus

Christ in the heavenly world; for according to this theory, if the unholy and wicked heart had not improved the day of grace and turned to God, all would have been lost, notwithstanding the atonement was made and all the sufferings of the dear Lord Jesus!!! It is as plain as the morning sun that these are the absurd consequences of their system; and not only absurd, but horribly blasphemous, *if stated with a knowledge* of their results. But I charitably believe that there are many Arminians who do not apprehend the consequences of their hypothesis, and when not engaged in controversy nor influenced by prejudice, will admit, as in the case of Dr. Clark, whose remarks, some of them I transcribed, that the grace of God *produces* all the good which ever was, now is, or ever will be, in any of the saints.

Now this I saw clearly, that God began the work—took away the stony heart and gave a heart of flesh; or in other words, *produced* gracious or holy exercises, or caused the sinner to turn to God. So of course I saw, as Mr. Fuller says, that the election which he and other divines held to, was not the means of the damnation of any soul, but the cause of the salvation of an innumerable number; and so far did the Arminian notions of election then appear to me from being more gracious or merciful than those of the divines mentioned above, that I saw clearly if the Arminian notions were true, not one soul would ever reach heaven.—For they contend that sinners with their wicked hearts, must first choose God before God chooses them; while the others contended that God had chosen to make or cause an innumerable number to be holy and happy in heaven; and that there was no more partiality in this, than what the Arminians were obliged to admit, according to their system, as I have already shewn in the case of the writer in the Christian Advocate and Journal. And according to Dr. Clark, if God by his grace produced all the holiness or obedience of the saints, most certainly it could not be wrong for him always to have *determined* to do it. If the work was right, the predetermination of it must be right. ☞This is the truth and you cannot deny it.

Moreover I saw that the sentiments which I had generally heard ascribed to that class of divines which I have again and again alluded to (Edwards, Bellamy, &c.) in respect to the decrees of God, predestination, &c. were as foreign from what their sentiments really were, as truth is from error. This I stated in the Religious Messenger not long since, in some communications drawn forth in consequence of an attack of a Universalist writer in the "Christian Telescope," on a work which I had lately published, entitled, "A Vindication of the Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints." The Religious Messenger had first recommended my work and inserted an extract in its columns. As the communications which finally were drawn forth, will serve to close the remarks which I think necessary to make in respect to my views of the decrees of God, admitting by the way, that I agree generally with those writers whom I there undertake to vindicate, and as the extract from the work on the perseverance of the saints may be, by the blessing of God, beneficial to the reader, and as the attack of the Universalist is a pretty fair specimen of the manner in which they generally treat their opponents, I will here insert the whole; beginning with the recommendation of the Messenger:

"*Rev. Mr.* POTTER'S *Vindication of the Doctrine of the final Perseverance of the Saints.*—Of this work we took a hasty notice, on its first appearance. From a rapid and partial perusal, it was impossible to do it full justice. We are now prepared to say that we do not know of a treatise written specially on that subject, and on that side of the question, to which we should so readily refer the inquisitive, for information, as to this little volume.

"The objections are met, and the arguments stated with a candor, force, and clearness, which make ample amends for any deficiency in elegance of style, which the critic might detect in the composition. And we have the satisfaction of knowing that in this opinion we are not singular, having heard good judges, of different denominations, express similar views.

"But whatever difference of sentiment there may be on the merits of the work, in general, or on the main question discussed, there is one topic introduced by the writer, toward the close of his treatise, to which too much importance cannot be attached. It is the question of the distinguishing characteristics of true conversion. To mistake these, is to mistake the whole of religion. And to this topic, Mr. Potter has, it is thought, done signal justice. If evangelical Christians, of all sects, would take pains to be united in the truth, on this point, the way might *then* be prepared to become united in the truth, on *other* points. Differences of opinion, on revivals of religion, could scarcely arise, or if they did, could be readily disposed of. A clear and distinct view of the *nature* of true conversion, would naturally lead to clear and distinct views of the proper *means* of promoting conversions. Scriptural views of the one, would lead to scriptural views of the other. And in the united pursuit of one great and *definite* object, less importance, either by the way of approbation, or censure, would be given to the circumstantial appendages to revivals, which neither prove or disprove their genuineness. Christians would be more united: opposers less audacious; and delusions less frequent. On these accounts we could wish the work of Mr. Potter (were it simply for the sake of what is comprised between the 102d page, and the close) were in the possession of every Christian minister on the continent. We present our readers with an extract from that portion of the work, of which we have been speaking, which will be found on our first page."

"Extract from the Rev. RAY POTTER's Vindication of the Doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints."

"See that your own heart does not deceive you by mistaking that to be true love to God, which in truth, is no such thing.

"A young man was in great distress of mind, respecting his state, he felt himself to be in danger of eternal damnation; the wrath of God abiding upon him, and unless he soon found mercy through a Re-

deemer, expected he must be miserable forever. He also felt wholly opposed in his heart, and unreconciled to God for *thus* bringing him into the world, so that there might be a possibility of sinning against him and consequently being miserable to all eternity. In this state, he continued for a long time, until it so happened that he went to hear a Universalist preach, who told him all was well, that God would save every body, and of course him among the rest, and then he loved God exceedingly and with a rapture. Now was this the love to God which is produced by regeneration? So far from it, the young man would still have hated God, if he had still believed that he would have punished impenitent sinners forever. But his love was *altogether* selfish (and who is there among all the sinners in the universe, that do not love themselves) and proceeded entirely from a mistaken view of God's moral character. The Universalist minister had pictured to his mind a God, who suited his unregenerate and carnal heart indeed; a God after the very image of his heart; and so he loved his God most dearly, when at the *very same time* he hated with his whole heart the holy sin-avenging character of the *true God.* In regeneration, 'WE' are changed and reconciled to and brought to love *all* the attributes of God, but false experiences and the love to God, of which I have been speaking, are founded in 'changing the glory of the incorruptible,' and Holy God, into a being who to the eternal loss of all holiness and righteousness in his own character, must pay adoration to us.

"Now there are very many, perhaps, who would be forward to exclaim, in respect to the aforementioned experience, delusion! delusion! the young man is yet in his sins; and at the same time are deluded in the very same way. I say in the same way, not because they have obtained relief from embracing the views of Universalists, but because their religion is altogether a selfish religion, and their love to God founded in the belief that God pays (if I may so speak) *particular attention to themselves.* Thus a young man was in *great* distress of

mind, condemned for his sins, he felt the wrath of God abide upon him, and if he did not soon obtain forgiveness of his sins through a mediator, he must be miserable forever. Horror filled his mind by night and day, and at the same time, he felt totally *unreconciled* to God, and could see no beauty in his holy moral character, but in his heart was opposed to *God's holiness, or justice.*

"After continuing for some time, in this dreadful distressed state, he *imagined* that his sins were forgiven him. He *thought* or it *seemed* to him he heard a voice saying to him that this was the case, and then directly he loved God most ardently; then he was enraptured with love to God. But why does he now love God? Is it because *his heart is changed,* and his mind illuminated by the Holy Spirit, so that he sees God's holy character in its native beauty, and by thus seeing, admires, adores and loves it for what it is, *considered in itself?* Or by thus beholding, is *changed into the same image,* and is thus reconciled to God's real character; to *all* his attributes? I say does his love to God proceed from *this view* of his character? No, he loves God solely and entirely because of the respect which God pays to his *own self.* He thinks God has forgiven his sins, and *therefore* he will *love* him now. And this is the *only reason why* he loves him. Now this delusion is exactly of the same nature with the other, which we have noticed, and still a great deal more specious; because, verily the subject of it has no idea of being a Universalist, he really believes God will punish impenitent sinners, but as he thinks God has had mercy on *him,* he loves him for *this* to be sure; but at *the same time,* if he did not feel very sure that he should escape the justice of God, he would hate him with all his heart, although he were still the *same* God, and however so *justly* exposed to his wrath by transgressing his law. Now observe, in true conversion, or the new birth, there is that work of the Holy Spirit slaying the enmity of the carnal mind which has existed in it, in respect to God's holiness, reconciling the subject of it to God's will; causing him to be at peace with God (and feeling this peace in

his soul) and also that work of the Holy Spirit *illuminating* his hitherto dark and benighted mind to see the beauty of holiness, to admire *God's holy* character, and consequently to love him for what *he is*, considered in *himself*. And I believe that the subjects of true regenerating grace are frequently so taken up at the time of the work's being accomplished on their heart, with this view of the loveliness of God's moral character, and beauty which there is in holiness *itself*, that they scarcely think of themselves, many times not once thinking at *the time* that this is religion, or that their sins are forgiven. They feel at peace with God, they are willing to be in his hands, they *see* and *understand*, that God is holy, just, and good, and they admire and love his law, as a transcript of his holy character, although it condemns to death every transgressor.

"God seems to them just as he should be in all his ways, and all his works, and it is not unfrequently the case that all animate and inanimate creation seem to them to conspire together to declare his goodness.—And now does this love to God proceed from the same source as in the other instances which we have mentioned? By no means."

FROM THE MESSENGER.

"*Christian Telescope*, vs. *Rev. Mr. Potter's Book.*

"A small work having lately appeared in favour of the doctrine of the *Final Perseverance of the Saints*, written and published by the Rev. Ray Potter, a Baptist minister of Pawtucket, and being well pleased with the publication as to its leading tendency and design, and having also a good opinion of the author as a man of piety and usefulness, who is moreover one of our steady friends and supporters, we took the liberty not only to announce the work in common form, but to make an extract from its pages; and had no apprehension in this land and age of freedom, that we should expose ourselves to the sneering reprehensions of any of the editorial fraternity. We have done in this case, what all conductors of public prints are constantly doing, in favour of the writings and sentiments of those with whom they symbolize in their

formulas and opinions; and of course we have no apology to make for our conduct. Such being the facts of the case, we are not a little surprised to see an article in the Christian Telescope, of which the following is a part:

"INSPIRATION CORRECTED.

"*Mr. Editor*—In perusing the *Rhode-Island Religious Messenger*, of the 31st ultimo, we were not a little surprised at the sentiments of an extract from a book recently published by Rev. Ray Potter, of Pawtucket. We had supposed that modern Calvinists had become more cautious than their predecessors, in publishing the unreasonable and offensive parts of their sentiments to the world, however they might cherish the belief of them in secret. But Mr. Potter has had less experience than many others in what is supposed to relate to the best policy in such concerns, and therefore, publishes their sentiments without reserve. We do not regret that he has done so, as it affords an opportunity for comparing an important item of their faith with the language of divine inspiration. * * * If the statement of Mr. Potter is to be believed, both the prophet of God and the apostle of Jesus Christ were *deluded and blind guides!* And Mr. Potter stands forth, the *champion* of Calvinism and the *correcter of inspiration!* We should think that some of this gentlemans's friends might be well employed in whispering to him the necessity of a little more modesty than to attempt to *correct* the sentiments of inspirations. We would by no means cast reflections upon the gentleman for any apparent mental disability; but for rashly condemning a plain sentiment of the bible, because it cannot be made to harmonize with the absurdities of Calvinism: and the same time, hint to his brethren or the editorial corps, the hazzardous experiment of making such senseless bantlings their own by *adoption.*'

"Now we complain of a certain something in the temper and phraseology of this quotation which is unbecoming gentlemen and Christians, who mean to

maintain towards each other habits of a kind and decorous nature. Unless we are much mistaken in our constructions, the Telescope has thus thrown the gauntlet for a war, which we shall certainly decline; as we are determined that our publication shall not be justly ranked among the belligerent powers of the day; it has also assumed a tone of dictation as to our selections, and indulged in terms of ridicule towards both Mr. Potter and ourselves, which we should not expect to have met with in a paper conducted by men of talents and fairness. We shall begin to think that their professed opponent does not deal altogether in caricature, in his represention of their modes of argument.

"The article, it is true is professedly the work of a correspondent, but we strongly suspect it might have roperly come under the head of *editorial matter;* and we are confident we are not alone in our conjectures.

"If the writer, whoever he may have been, wished to attack Mr. Potter, or his arguments, as his work is before the public, and is circulated freely, why did he not commence it upon that alone, without drawing us into the contest? And if the strictures are really the work of some controversial contributer, why do not the conductors of the Telescope, if they intend to support the character of impartiality, admit Mr. Potter to make his defence, and correct the false reasonings of the piece against him, which we are informed they have failed to do.

"Nothing more on this will be said by us. Mr. Potter must, of course, have room in our columns, should those of the Telescope continue closed against him."

FOR THE MESSENGER.

"*Answer to 'Portius.'*

Mr. Editor—In perusing your paper of the 26th ult. I observed with pleasure, a few pertinent remarks on a communication in the Christian Teslescope of Sept. 29th, headed 'Inspiration Corrected,' signed 'Portius,' and containing strictures on an extract from a work of mine on the '*Final Perseverance of the Saints*,'

which you were pleased to make in your paper of 31st Aug. I also tender my acknowledgments for the privilege which you have there offered me of making my defence in the columns of the Messenger, should those of the Telescope continue closed against me. I made application to reply in the columns of the Telescope soon after noticing the communication of 'Portius,' complaining that he had misrepresented the extract, had stated that I had written *that* which I had not written; and that he had done this in his communication more than *thrice;* which I held myself bound to make appear, if I might but have the liberty to answer for myself. But silence has ever since reigned in the Telescope, so far as it respects this subject, and I must say, that if there were no other vehicles of truth than such publications that *error* would forever reign too. Perhaps the Telescope has had so much to do of late in detecting the orthodox dishonesty in their missionary movements, in trying to send the book of God where it is not known, and their duplicity and *Priestcraft* in religious revivals, that in other matters it could not find time to *publish the truth* nor to correct misrepresentations after they were numerously inserted in its columns. Would it not seem more congruous with '*universal benevolence*' to attend a little to the latter, rather than bestow all their labour on the former?

"The extract which has been *misrepresented*, and then ridiculed in the Telescope, is from that part of my work on the Perseverance of the Saints, where I have endeavored to warn the reader of the danger of delusion in religious experience, or of taking that to be true love to God which in truth is no such thing. In order to make it appear plain that such a self-deception is possible, I have given a specimen of two different ways, by which persons were in danger of being led to the same fatal place, and thereby mistake that to be a holy exercise, or true love to God, which is nothing but selfishness, and might be found in the

heart of the most unsanctified and wicked man on earth.

"'A young man was in great distress of mind, respecting his state, he felt himself to be in danger of eternal damnation; the wrath of God abiding upon him, and unless he soon found mercy through a Redeemer, expected he must be miserable forever. He also felt wholly opposed in his heart, and unreconciled to God for *thus* bringing him into the world, so that there might be a possibility of sinning against him, and consequently being miserable to all eternity. In this state, he continued for a long time, until it so happened that he went to hear a Universalist preach, who told him all was well, that God would save every body, and of course him among the rest, and then he loved God exceedingly and with a rapture. Now was this the love to God which was produced by regeneration? So far from it, the young man would still have hated God, if he had still believed that he would still have punished impenitent sinners forever. But his love was *altogether* selfish (and who is there among all the sinners in the universe, that do not love themselves) and proceeded entirely from a mistaken view of God's moral character.'"

"Now Portius, in his communication, asserts that I acknowledge that this person loved God: and triumphantly boasts that I recommend the preaching of Universalists as being of incalculable service in bringing poor perishing and trembling sinners to the knowledge and love of God. To make this appear, he proposes to transcribe a part of the extract; in doing which, he leaves off at an *ironical* expression of mine concerning the person's exercise, viz. "*then he loved God exceedingly and with a rapture;*" and from that assumes the ground that *I admit* that he did really love God with *that love* which is required in the first great commandment of God's law. Now Portius must have known that I acknowledged no such thing, but that the whole of that part of the extract relating to the person here mentioned, went to prove that he still *hated God*,

which the reader will observe by noticing it as transcribed above. What does *Portius* mean, when he says, "*and this unfortunate Apostle and all his brethren, were involved in fatal error and delusion, and probably left the world in carnal security.*" Is this an ironical expression? or would Portius consider himself well used, for any one to state this as his real sentiment concerning the Apostle's state and exercises? But he takes an ironical expression of mine in the extract, as *my real sentiment*, and as something which I had admitted; and from premises thus established, he draws conclusions to the length of half a column. It may be thought rather severe on Portius that I should say he *must have known* that he was misrepresenting the sentiment of the extract; but as there is not "*any apparent mental disability*" in the gentleman, and as he has also virtually *acknowledged* the fact, I see no impropriety in the language. For observe, what does Portius himself say, after establishing the premises and drawing the inferences above mentioned? This is his language:—"*Now according to Mr. Potter, all this is false experience, carnal and selfish love.*" Portius therefore knew that *my statement* was that the person's experience spoken of was a false experience, and that all the love which he had was *carnal, selfish love;* yet behold him a few lines above stating directly to the contrary of this, and from thence arguing that I condemn *that* love to God spoken of by the Apostle John!

"But is this all? If it were, his communication would seem more tolerable than it does in its present shape.

"'*The second example* (says Portius) *which he produces of false experience, is the case of an Arminian.*' What could induce Portius to make this statement? Has he any foundation for it in the extract?—None at all; and yet he has made it three times, in writing *thirteen short* lines. I have said no such thing, nor have even intimated any such thing as Portius here assserts that I have. The very impression which this statement of "Portius" is calculated to make on the

mind of the reader of his communication, is that I have *condemned all Arminians as having nothing but a false experience*, than which nothing can be more foreign from the truth. In the course of my work, I have repeatedly stated that I believe many who hold this sentiment speculatively, are real Christians; and in giving this 'second example' of false experience, I say nothing about Arminians, nor that they were more likely to be deceived in the way which I there stated, than any other denomination. The way of deception which I there alluded to, was for a person to imagine his sins forgiven when they *were not*, and so loving God *solely* because he supposed God had mercy in *particular* on him. But Portius says that this second example is the case of an Arminian. An indefinite expression. I wonder if Portius will accuse me now of attempting to '*correct inspiration*,' merely because I stand up in my own defence, or rather in defence of truth, and show the public, that he has *disobliged* (I must use moderate expressions with this gentleman) the truth, *three times*, in the course of thirteen short lines of the Telescope, and also that the rest of his piece (to use his own moderate phrase) is nothing but 'senseless bantlings.' The whole drift of my remarks in the extract is to show that the real Christian does not love God *solely* on account of favor shown to *himself*, but for what *he is*, considered in himself; nor is there one word to be found in the extract from which a fair inference could be drawn, that I condemn gratitude to God for *personal* blessings, yet Portius would fain represent me in this point of view, and as condemning the exercises and expressions of the Prophet of God!! Is this the vindicator of universal benevolence? And is this paper, which admits such communications, in which the truth is repeatedly '*disobliged*,' and then refuses to admit an answer, the paper that watches, as with a vulture's eye, the movements of the orthodox in their Missionary exertions, in trying to carry the 'Book of Truth' among the heathen; and is also so careful to warn the public of the duplicity and

priestcraft of the orthodox in religious revivals, where they are instrumentally bringing sinners to the knowledge of the "Truth!"—No doubt, for the spread of the truth must be exceedingly *disadvantageous* to such publications. O ye physicians, heal yourselves; then will ye see no cause, under the sun, to write down the exertions of God's people in trying to evangelize the world, nor of these ideas advanced in the extract from my book.

RAY POTTER.

Pawtucket, Oct. 19, 1827."

Inserted in the R. I. Religious Messenger, January 4, 1828.

"FOR THE MESSENGER.

"MR. EDITOR—Having paused for a reply to my communication in a late number of the Messenger in answer to 'Portius' of the Christian Teslescope of September 29th, and hearing nothing from him in vindication of his remarks or acknowledgment of his errors, I beg leave to offer a few more thoughts in relation to the subject. I know it to be a common course with Universalists, and particularly with their theological publications, when they are promptly met and confuted in controversy, and when their sophistry and duplicity are exposed by their opponents, to immediate resort to '*silent contempt.*' This is their impenetrable fortress. No sooner is their own likeness shown them, than they take umbrage at the sight, (and this by the way is not very remarkable) find fault with the communications of their opponents as being too exceptionable for publication in their own periodicals, and if published in others, too scurilous to deserve their notice. Now the serpent is more subtle than any beast of the field, and thus we have a specimen of his artful cunning. This undoubtly is the *easiest* way for them to answer their opponents. I made application to answer in their own columns, and pledged myself to *show* that 'Portius' had misrepresented me. But what answer? Why '*silent contempt.*' I did reply in

the Messenger and showed the public that 'Portius' had *disobliged the truth three times in writing thirteen short lines*, and in fine that his whole communication was a tissue of misrepresentation. And what answer? The same, Mr. Editor, '*silent contempt.*'

"'And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son which hath a *dumb spirit.*

"'*And wheresoever he taketh him he teareth him; and he foameth and gnasheth with his teeth, and he pineth away.*' O that the dumb devils were cast out of 'Portius' and the Telescope, that they might speak and confess their sins!

"Now why did 'Portius' notice me in the first place? He must either acknowledge that I deserve notice, or that the columns of the Telescope have been filled with 'tares' and sold for 'wheat.' Does the Telescope mean to deal thus with its patrons? I insist upon it if I do not deserve notice, the Telescope has been selling chaff for money. This I should think as wicked as to send men of God among the heathen to show them the way of salvation. O, these guardians of the public weal, they ought to have the seat of Mr. Justice Story, without delay. Considering their unwarrantable attack, together with their subsequent course, it is probable I have erred in not rebuking them more sharply. But as I would wish to avoid every thing which looks like retaliation or revenge, if I err, I choose that it should be on the side of moderation. In a future No. Mr. Editor, with your permission I shall attempt to show why the words Calvinism and Calvinists are so frequently used in the communication of 'Portius' and why he represents me as saying that the second example of false experience was that of an Arminian. This I shall do however without any particular reference to these *silent* gentlemen, but because I think remarks may be made in relation to these subjects deserving public notice. RAY POTTER.

Paxtucket December 27, 1827."

"FOR THE MESSENGER.

"*Mr Editor*—In my communication of the 28th ult. I promised to consider the subject and endeavor to show the probable reason why 'Portius' in his attack upon my book has so freely used the words Calvinists and Calvinism, and why he represented me as saying that the second example of false experience was that of an Arminian. I will now redeem that promise. Universalists, and perhaps others, have raised a fabric of most frightful and fiend-like aspect, in view of the world, which they have painted as black as the blackness of darkness could make it, and named it 'Calvinism.'—The main pillar of this palace of Beelzebub is 'that God has decreed from all eternity that men should act wickedly, although they might *at the same time be ever so willlng to act righteously* and then punish them to all eternity for doing that which they could not help doing, *notwithstanding they were entirely willing to have acted differently, if they could.*' This pillar is marked the 'dire or horrible decree.' I shall not have room to give the inscriptions entire of all the timber in this edifice, but I will mention enough to frighten Beelzebub himself, although there can be no doubt of his being the master-workman in its construction. Accordingly one stick represents 'God as making men on *purpose and for no other end* than to pour out his wrath on them to all eternity.' Another 'that God is the *sinful* author of all moral evil'—another 'that he is a partial Being or wicked respecter of persons'—another 'that he is a vindictive tyrant'—another 'that he compels some few to go to heaven, although they are *very unwilling* to go.'—These are some of the beams of the house, and it is *braced* up well with the same *kind of stuff*. Now this I say is named 'Calvinism,' or in other words, it is said these were some of the theological ideas of Calvin.

"Admit for a moment that Calvin did hold sentiments like these, and published them to the world, yet he might at the same time hold and publish others as true as the word of God itself, yet how convenient it is for those who wish to prejudice the minds of the unsus-

pecting against said truths to represent them as being held by John Calvin who burnt Servetus; that they belong to this horrible system of '*dire decree*,' or in other words, that they are a part of the timber which the devil has framed into the castle mentioned above, on purpose to shut up poor sinners in despair. This I say is a very convenient, short and easy way to keep men in darkness and from knowing the truth as it is in Jesus, and perhaps the great adversary of souls in conjunction with his kindred spirits never invented one more efficacious. It undoubtedly has ruined its hundreds of thousands, and bids fair to lead as many more along the road of error down to ruin and irremediless wo.

"Having drawn this picture of what they are pleased to call 'Calvinism,' the advocates of error and false doctrine have only to represent any truth which they wish to oppose as being *connected* with this system, and lo! the work is done for thousands. They dare not look at the sentiment advanced, be it ever so scriptural or reasonable, lest in approaching it they get entangled in the 'horrible decree of doing wickedly,' although *ever so willing* to be holy; of being obliged to go to hell, although *ever so willing to serve God* and go to heaven, or of being compelled, *contrary to their will*, to bless and praise God forever in his kingdom!! I am not able to say what Calvin believed or wrote, having never read his Institutes, or but a very few pages of them in my life; yet I do not believe that his sentiments (although he might have held some errors) were what they are frequently stated to have been by Universalists and others who have made his system of divinity a subject of severe animadversion, and have reprobated it as coming immediately from the regions of darkness. Be that as it may, it no way affects the sentiments vindicated in my work on the perseverance of the saints. Those sentiments are drawn from the inspired volume, written by prophets, evangelists and apostles, long before Calvin or Luther were born.—Having in the days of my youth suffered much on account of the misrepresentation of things stated in the

foregoing, I have been determined, since being apprized of the deception, to fearlessly search the word of God, and believe what I find there written, and as fearlessly propagate what I believe to be true. It appears to me evident that 'Portius' made the statement, 'that the second example of false experience which I had given was that of an Arminian,' on purpose to carry to Arminians the idea that I considered them *all* as totally destitute of true religion. I have a right to draw this inference, and I believe every unprejudiced, candid reader would draw the same. Although it is acknowledged that the doctrine of the saints' perseverance is an Anti-Arminian doctrine, yet in discussing the subject in opposition to their creed, I have no where represented them as not being pious; but, to the contrary, have frequently stated that I believed many of them to be real Christians. But 'Portius,' fearing that his '*scare-crow*' word 'Calvinism,' would not effect all he wished concerning the extract, concluded undoubtedly to enlist the prejudice of Arminians against it, by the misrepresentation alluded to. In a future number, Mr. Editor, with your permission, I will shew that whatever may have been the theological sentiments of Calvin, yet the offensive and disgusting ideas which are exhibited to public view as being the fundamental principles of his creed, are no more applicable to many writers on polemical divinity, who have been called Calvinists, than the character of an honest, fair controversial writer belongs to 'Portius.'

RAY POTTER.

Pawtucket, January 2, 1828."

FOR THE MESSENGER.

"*Mr. Editor.*—In my communication of the 18th ult. I proposed to show in a future No. of your paper 'that the offensive and disgusting ideas which are frequently exhibited to public view as comprising the system of *Calvinism*, are no more applicable to many writers on polemical divinity who have been called Calvinists, than the character of a fair honest contro-

versial writer belongs to Portius, who figured in the Christian Telescope sometime in September last, in a communication almost '*Universally*' destitute of truth, in relation to a work published by me on the Saints' perseverance. This has been deferred, not because it is a work which required much meditation or time to prepare it for public inspection; but because other engagements, and particularly an attention for no small part of the intervening time between my last communication and the present moment, to what Universalists would probably term *mad excitements* have prevented. By the way, I would remark that where I have witnessed religious excitements and a revival of God's work, Universalists have generally appeared *raving mad;* especially when numbers have forsaken their ranks, renounced their soul-deceiving doctrines, and come over to the side of truth. If this is their meaning when speaking of *mad excitements*, I acknowledge they should have credit for speaking the truth once; for of all the mad-men I have ever seen, Universalists, in time of a genuine revival of religion, I think exceed. But to return—my object as will readily be perceived, is not to defend the sentiments of all who are, or have been called Calvinists. This would be undertaking to defend point-blank contradictory systems; for although, all who have been denominated Calvinists, may have held *some* gospel truths in which all have agreed, yet they have as widely differed in respect to other points, and indeed in respect to the fundamental principles of their systems, as each one of them differed from the Universalists. It is therefore unfair to take the unreasonable and unscriptural sentiments of one man and apply them to another, merely because the two were agreed in *some other* things. But this has been the course pursued by many, as I mentioned in my last communication. Some who have been denominated Calvinists, have contended that the moral law of God has been done away by the death of Christ in respect to its demands on the elect—others denominated Calvinists, believe

that the atonement is not general in its nature, but limited to the elect, and consequently—that the offer of salvation cannot consistently be made to all sinners indiscriminately, that sinners have not *natural ability* to serve God, making them like stocks and stones. But there have been many writers on polemical divinity in different ages of the church, *who*, while they may have agreed with divines holding the above mentioned sentiments in *some other respects*, yet have differed from them materially in these and other fundamental points of doctrine, which might be mentioned. These have also been denominated Calvinists. So we see the word 'Calvinism' is an ambiguous phrase when applied to theological opinions. and that there is nothing definite in the word any farther than this; some controversial theologians make it a rule to use the phrase as a death warrant to serve upon their opponents when they cannot confute them by scripture or fair argument; for they have so fitted out the term with horns and claws externally, malice, inexorable tyranny and every other hateful disposition, internally, that it is enough with many readers and hearers, only to call a man a Calvinist, and you may be assured they will never come near enough to him to examine his sentiments *candidly* for fear of getting horned, or clawed or poisoned by this hydra headed monster. It is not for the word I would contend, nor as I before observed for the sentiments of very many who have borne the name, but would endeavour to show that the sentiments of *others* who have *also* borne the name are, *generally speaking*, congenial with truth and altogether different from what they have frequently been represented to be. I would not pretend that this class of writers have been infallibly correct in *every particular*, as that we are to take any uninspired writer for our standard in theology, yet I believe they have come very near the truth in their illustrations of scriptural doctrines, and if their works were read *without prejudice* I have no doubt would be a great help to those who are enquiring to know the truth as it is in Jesus. Those unto

whom I have all along alluded, are such men as President Edwards, Dr. Bellamy, Rev. Andrew Fuller, and many others which might be mentioned, of the same stamp. Now what were the sentiments of these men and hundreds of thousands of others who have agreed with them generally: let us glance at them for a moment, and we shall be able to see how unjustly those disgusting ideas have been applied to them by many who being unable to contend with them on the field of fair argument have resorted to slander, in order to vanquish them."

"What does this class of theologians teach respecting the 'dire decree?' Do they teach that the Great Supreme has bound the intelligent, intellectual beings whom he has made; or rather a part of them, by chains of fatality, to sin againt him contrary to their *own choice*, and then that he punishes them for doing what they could not *help doing*, provided they were *ever so willing* to have done differently? Or, rather, do they teach that God's decrees rob man of his free moral agency, or deprive him of perfect liberty, in acting just as he *chooses* to act? No such thing: this is no part of the system of Divinity which they teach; and never was there, perhaps, a more foul aspersion than this cast on any person's sentiments. To the entire reverse of this, they declare, that sinners, in sinning, act precisely as they *choose* to act; and if they do not act as they choose, they are *not* blameworthy; and that saints also act as they choose; thus attributing the most perfect *free moral agency* to men and angels which can be conceived of; for what more can be asked for to constitute free *moral agents* than the privilege of acting as they choose? and where is the impropriety or injustice, inexorable tyranny or malicious cruelty, in punishing free moral agents for those sins which they have *freely* and of their *own choice* committed. Now whatever else this class of Divines and Christians believe in respect to the Divine Decrees, they *do not* believe that they interfere with man's free moral agency. This they most ex-

plicitly avow. Are they not as worthy of credit as other controversial writers or speakers? Why not believe them, when they solemnly and unequivocally avow their sentiments? But, say some, these horrible ideas are the consequence of their notions in respect to God's predestination of moral evil. To which I answer:—if these disgusting ideas are a fair inference, or a legitimate consequence, of any notions of this class of theologians respecting the decrees of God, then they are a fair deduction from the sentiments of *any other* class in Christendom who admit that there is blameworthiness in sin, and that God will punish transgressors of his law in hell. For where is there a class but what believe in the divine decrees? Ask any sect whatever if they believe in the decrees of God, and they will answer in the affirmative. But they wish the privilege of explaining to you what they *mean* by the decrees of God. Ask, for instance, the Arminian, if he believes in the divine decrees, and he readily answers, 'Yes, *I believe that God decreed from all eternity all that he Himself will ever do.*' Well God made man—the creation of man is certainly a work of God. It is therefore something which God has done, and according to the sentiments of Arminians, it was predetermined or decreed before it took place. God therefore decreed, according to Arminians, to make man a free moral agent, and, of course, according to their system or reasoning in respect to the divine decrees, at the *same time* that he determined to make man a free moral agent, he determined or decreed that there should exist (free agency) by which he knew that sin *would enter into the world.* For it must, and undoubtedly *will*, be admitted on all hands, that God knew before he made man how he would behave, as well as after he transgressed. It therefore stands thus: God knew before he made free moral agents, that *if he made them* they would transgress his law, and, therefore, that moral evil would enter into the universe; and *if he should not make man*, that moral evil or sin *would not* enter the

universe, (for there was no other possible way for sin to enter the system, but through the voluntary disobedience of free moral agents,) yet God, in *full view* of what would take place in respect to the disobedience of angels and men, determined or decreed to make them, and therefore, even according to the Arminian system, *decreed that sin should enter the world.* He could not *decree* to make man, without at the same time, decreeing that sin should enter the system ; for, as the Arminians say, (and I believe every other man of common sense will say the same,) past, present and future, as they are conceived of by us, are with the great I Am, one eternal Now. That is, that all things from everlasting to everlasting are always present with God—that he sees the end from the beginning. If so he certainly *always* saw how man would behave *if he made him*—viz. that he would sin ; and yet the Arminians believe that from eternity he decreed to make him, and consequently, that *sin should take place.* For, as I observed above how could he decree to make man without decreeing that sin should take place, when it was infallibly certain, if he did make him, that *he would sin.* The Arminians, then, in a *certain sense*, hold that God *decreed* that sin should take place ; yet I presume they would complain, if they were represented as believing that God is the *sinful author* of sin —that his predeterminations deprive man of his free moral agency—that they make man a mere machine, bound, by chains of fatality, to sin—that he has made millions of men on purpose to damn them, &c. yet these things might as *consistently* be *charged* to *their account* as fair inferences from the premises which they have laid down in respect to the decrees of God, as they are charged upon Edwards, Bellamy, Fuller, and those who agree with them in their views of the divine decrees.

"They indeed believe that God reigns—that the 'wrath of man shall praise him and the remainder of wrath he will restrain'—that all the sin of men and devils shall finally be *overruled* to the glory of God and

the good of all holy beings—that there is not a sparrow that falls to the ground without God—that men and devils shall go no farther in sin and rebellion than he is pleased to permit—that he has predetermined that his Son shall have a reward for his sufferings in the salvation of an innumerable multitude of sinners; *not* out of partiality to them, but for the manifestation of the glory of his grace in saving those who were utterly undeserving his favor, *whose salvation is not uncertain or precarious, but that it is immutably sure that God will have a people*—that 'his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure' from everlasting to everlasting and throughout all his dominion, &c. but as for their teaching, that any decree of God takes away the free moral agency of men or angels, they teach *no such thing* to my knowledge; and I have read their theological writings on these points with care. They uniformly and explicitly state, that those who are finally lost, freely and voluntarily choose the road which leads to death—that they ruined themselves, and that nothing could have hindered their salvation who live under the gospel—no predestination of heaven or the devil or man; no situation in life, whether of riches or poverty, sickness or health, if they had not obstinately and with their whole heart, rejected salvation freely offered to them, and wilfully continued in this course through life, for which conduct they have no possible excuse. In short, I conceive that there is no just ground of finding fault with their ideas in respect to the decrees of God; and, when *clearly understood*, that none will find fault with them unless they feel *unwilling* that God should reign according to his sovereign will and pleasure. So far, Mr. Editor, are those who advocate these sentiments, from wishing to hide them, as was intimated by Portius, that they wish them to be universally known. They only deprecate the misrepresentation of them, in consequence of which many condemn them because they do not *understand* them. This has once been my unhappy lot, and, as I apprehend, there may be many now in the same state,

being imposed upon by misrepresentations of the truths and doctrines of the gospel, you will, I trust, indulge me in some future numbers of your paper, with the privilege of shewing, that other things have been laid to the charge of the class of theologians which I am advocating, of which they are by no means guilty. I am prompted to this, not with the vain expectation of benefitting the learned, but to help those who have not enjoyed the privilege, by reading and other means, of inquiring into these controverted points, and who, like myself in former times, have been imposed on by the cunning and sophistry of such writers as 'Portius' and others. RAY POTTER.

Pawtucket, March 10, 1828."

Thus we see that Arminians, in respect to the decrees of God are in the same predicament that they are in relation to the subject of God's dealing differently with men. They are obliged to own that in a *certain sense* God has predetermined all things, and that is all which Calvinists say. Ask a Calvinists, if he believes that God has predetermined all things, and he says yes. You take his answer without any further explination put your own construction upon it and make it look frightful, and call it the "dire and horrible decree." But how does he believe that God has predetermined all things? Does he mean that the decrees of God take away the free moral agency of man? By no means.

He believes that men act with all the moral freedom which it is possible for them to possess. That is, they always act as they choose. Well you are an Arminian—do you believe that God has predetermined all things? O no! not in your sense—sooner let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth than ever propagate such an awful doctrine. But you believe that God, from all eternity, knew perfectly well all which would take place this day? O yes. Well, you believe that he could have prevented it if he had seen best? O yes. Well you see he did not prevent it

but *determined that it should take place.* O, but man is a free moral agent, you say, and does as he chooses! Very well; does not the Calvinist say the same? And now pray tell me how far you are from the *same place* that he is? You are both agreed that in a certain sense God has predetermined all things—and why find fault with what you are obliged to admit to be true?

Objection.—Then it is of no use to exhort sinners to repent—

Ans. Stop a moment, and I will help you out with your objection. It is no use to exhort sinners to repent if Arminianism be true, for you might invite them, and invite them forever and ever to come to the feast, and they all with one consent will forever make an excuse and refuse to come—but according to the ideas advanced and vindicated in the foregoing work, it is of *great* use, and there is great encouragement to preach the gospel to sinners and to exhort them to repent, for God has *promised* that his son shall see the travel of his soul and be satisfied, and he will make the gospel the power of God unto the salvation of many souls, and will bring many souls to glory. Thus you pray my Arminian brother—you pray to God to change the hearts of sinners, and to bring them into the house just as we argue and preach. Why dont you *preach* as you pray; or pray as you preach? If you were to pray as you preach it would run thus—O Lord, thou hast done all which thou ever canst do consistently to save sinners, in making the atonement and preparing the feast, and now if sinners do not with their desperately wicked hearts improve the grace which thou hast already given them, they will all be lost! Now why do Arminians in their arguments with their opponents say that God has done all which he can do consistently, and then go directly to God, and beseach him to do more, even to *bring* sinners in to the feast.

CHAPTER X.

Relation of External Circumstances, continued from chapter 8th. Exercises and state of mind farther described, &c.

After being deprived of the meeting house to preach in, as I have given the relation in the 8th chapter, I felt the need of much grace to support me, and also wisdom to direct how to act and what course to take in such trying circumstances. There were opportunities for me in abundance to preach in other places with an apparent prospect (according to human calculations) of prosperous temporal circumstances, but I could not find liberty in my mind to leave a church who had stood by me through the whole scene of mental sufferings and outward calamities, which I had been wading through with a constancy which was truly admirable. They were *true to me* through evil report as well as good report, apparently deaf to the bribery of riches and voice of calumny and reproach; and therefore to leave them when they manifested great anxiety for me to remain, was more than any heart could endure. It was worse than death! But *how* to remain was a question which faith in God alone could answer. There seemed to be every possible means used by some to hedge up my way, and to reduce me to the necessity of leaving. Those who had contributed to my support were persuaded to desist. I was told, in one instance, that as one of my friends was coming to visit me at the time that I was so out of health as to be unable to attend to my ministerial duties, an attempt was made to discourage him, notwithstanding my sickness, with a wife and family of small and helpless children in destitute circumstances. Besides, when the difficulty was unsettled in respect to the meeting house, I had said, that if the case was left to men, and I lost the house, I would retire from preaching in the school house, where I then preached, after being shut out of the meeting house as has already

been observed—the school house being very near by. Our opponents seemed to insist that this should be done *immediately*, and because it was not, reproached me much; and although I intended to withdraw as *soon as possible* from the school house, yet it seemed to me ungenerous that I must be driven out *precipitately*, when we had no where to go, and especially as we talked some of trying to obtain another house.

Men condemned to be hung have generally time allowed them to prepare to die, and it grieved me to the heart when I reflected on the unjust proceedings in depriving us of the meeting house, and their subsequent conduct also. We were, however, forced to leave the upper part of the school house and retire into the cellar kitchen, (as it was termed,) while in the mean time, we began to make exertions to obtain another house.

This, to be sure, looked like the next thing to an impossibility—for the public had just been contributing freely to build one; and we were almost entirely dependent on their munificence for means to erect another. I however commenced soliciting subscriptions amidst all the darkness and discouragements which surrounded me. Scarcely any one seemed to have faith that I should succeed. Many on whom I called for help observed that they had just given liberally, in order that I should be benefitted, but were disappointed, and therefore felt backward in again contributing. I however endeavoured to do as David did at a certain time, "*encouraged myself in the Lord my God*," and moved forward in the undertaking. I soon obtained enough to purchase a lot, which was accordingly done; and in the next place made out to obtain a frame. After the frame was raised it stood some weeks before any thing more was done, and in the mean time I was informed that certain *wise men* exulted in the apparent stagnation of the proceedings, and sneeringly offered to buy the frame, considering it a pity, they said, to have it remain in that situation uncovered and going to decay. It reminded me of the contempt with which Nehemiah and his people were treated when about rebuilding the walls

of Jerusalem. I however committed my case to God, and with unremitting diligence continued to strive for the accomplishment of the object. My health was precarious, yet notwithstanding this, I travelled almost incessantly on foot, during the warm season of the year too; and when so wearied that I could proceed no farther, would fall on the ground, call on God to help me in the undertaking, and weep before him at times, on account of my great trials, and the mountainous difficulties which were before me.

Through the abounding goodness of God, however, we were enabled to finish the house in less than one year from the time we lost the other. When I review these scenes I cannot but recognize the good hand of God in causing the mountains to become a plain, and opening the way before us. "Bless the Lord O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

The house was so built as to be wholly under the control of the church, which I consider as the only consistent plan in the erection of houses of public worship.—It was rather larger on the floor than the one we lost, and would seat more people; and we also built so that we had the privilege of letting the pews, whereas the other was pledged in the subscription paper which was presented to the public, to have the seats free, and any deviation from this proposition and condition on which the donors contributed to erect the house, by selling or letting the pews, would amount to just this—*professedly obtaining money for a specific use and then converting it to another.*

Our house cost only about twelve hundred dollars and would seat about four hundred people. It is to be feared that in our highly favoured country there is frequently more external show in splendid and costly houses for public worship and the appended superfluities, than there is of vital piety and pure devotion to God in the hearts of the worshippers. What shall we say in approbation of building houses costing twenty, thirty, forty thousand dollars and upwards. It rather savours of human pride and worldly splendour than a sincere desire to glorify

God and to do good to the souls of men. Men are strangely prone to rest in external forms and ceremonies for salvation, while the heart remains unsanctified and opposed to the simplicity of the gospel. "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall;" "and every mountain must be made low," "and he that exalteth himself abased." But I must be careful that I do not get *proud* of my *humility!* In the early ages of the church, however, when Christianity seemed to shine in its native simplicity and purity we have reason to believe that the people of God usually worshipped in private houses, and it must be admitted that the worldly pomp with which Constantine clad the humble religion of Him who was laid in a manger, was more fatal to the progress and prosperity of the cause of the Redeemer than all the fire and faggots of the most malignant persecutors that ever lived. I consider the following remarks of the Rev. John Neave, (which is extracted from the English Review in the new Baptist Miscellany,) in a discourse on "the means of promoting a Revival of Religion in the Churches," at the present time, and in the present state of things, appropriate and worth attention.

"*Where is the Work of the Lord?*"—"Places of worship are multiplying on every hand, and each succeeding one surpasses its predecessor in architectural magnificence and splendour; the style of preaching in them is becoming daily more refined, the congregation dress with the most accurate observance of the modes of the current month, and larger sums of money than ever, are raised for domestic and foreign objects: but, as Samuel Pearce exclaimed, in almost his last sermon, "WHERE IS THE WORK OF THE LORD?" Where shall we discover the spirituality of mind, the sterling, self-denying, enduring, active, glowing piety of a former age? Then the exterior of religion was indeed deficient of the elegances of a modern profession; but then those "who named the name of Christ," bore his image and breathed his spirit. There is, it must be confessed, a sufficiency of excitement at present; but we fear that

this excitement arises more from the imagination than the understanding, and affects the nerves instead of the heart.

We should rejoice to see more simplicity, among both preachers and hearers, with a more steady and thoroughly principled devotion to the great objects of the Christian vocation; but we perceive on every hand too much of a sickly and languid taste, which has no relish for that which is plain and solid, and receives with pleasure only stimulants. We confess that notwithstanding all this, there is much in the present state of things to afford us pleasure, and we know that beneath this flowery, and, therefore, most unpromising, surface, there is a vein of "pure and undefiled religion;" but we feel it to be an inviolable duty to contribute, in our humble measure, to detect and expose those glittering trifles, which to the common injury, are too often substituted for spiritual realities."

But to return—I now found obstacles in the way of preaching the gospel, to which, while I was an Arminian, I was an entire stranger. I now began to be called a *Calvinist;* and this by multitudes with whom I have been held, as I have reason to believe, in high estimation, was considered to be the antipodes of truth, and a most uncomfortable heterogenious system of contradictions, the tender mercies whereof were nothing but inexorable cruelties. Besides, when I undertook to expostulate with many on the great sin and unfairness of *misrepresenting* the doctrines which they were pleased to call Calvinistic, and to reason with them on the impropriety and wickedness of not readily admitting the testimony of scripture in support of certain doctrines, especially that of the perseverance of the saints, I was met frequently with this reply—I learnt it of you! This was like a sword piercing my own soul. I was obliged to plead guilty, and looked upon myself with feelings of detestation and abhorrence for having been an instrument of propagating error and declaiming against the truth, although I was as sincere perhaps, while so doing, as any Arminian whatever. I saw plainly that the

system of doctrines which I then found to be truth, the plain revealed truth of God—I say I saw that this system was calculated to stir up opposition in the selfish proud heart of man, that every particle of it was directly contrary to the feelings and affections of the unregenerate, and to Christians too, so far as they remained selfish and unregenerate. I was grieved at my past folly, and was, I believe, truly humbled before God. I resolved to endeavour to do all that I could in defence of the truth, which I now saw to be almost universally trodden under foot, with but few faithful advocates. How plain I *now* saw my former blindness, and that tens of thousands whom I had reason to believe were Christians, were in the same state; and that Zion was bleeding at every pore on account of the divisions existing among the people of God, originating in a misunderstanding and misrepresentation by many of the precious truths of the bible. It seemed that I could see the device of the devil in dressing up a frightful system, *partly* from the unwarrantable and unscriptural notions of some who had been denominated Calvinists, and partly from the *false colourings* which Arminians in their controversial heat had given the true bible system of divinity, and then to set up the clamour that an accession and entire acquiescence with the truth was an assimilation to this horrid picture.

I think that I now felt a zeal for the Lord of Hosts beyond what I had ever felt before, and a desire to be valiant for the truth in the earth. It was exceedingly painful for me to see man robbing God of his glory and not willing that he should reign and govern the universe—representing his holy and benevolent sovereignty to be wicked partiality and unfeeling cruelty. Certain persons seemed to be full as industrious as ever I knew them to be in any *benevolent undertaking*, in representing my sentiments in a most unfavourable light to my brethren and dearest friends.

An attempt was evidently made to alienate the church from me or to produce a schism, by the alarming tale of my Calvinism. But forever blessed be the

name of Him "who leadeth Joseph like a flock" and waters his church every moment, these attempts which savoured more of the spirit of Beelzebub than of the Prince of Peace, proved abortive. Not but one individual of the brethren was prevailed upon to leave on account of this outcry, and he has since returned, so that the attempts of those "*kind friends of the truth*" to scatter the flock of Christ, proved abortive.

I reflect on the subject with gratitude to God and unfeigned love to my brethren, that they have ever manifested a Christian affection for me and have treated me with candour, notwithstanding they, some of them at least, do not see with me on doctrinal points. Some, however, were rejoiced when I gave up the unscriptural and uncomfortable doctrine of falling from grace and hailed the change which had taken place in my theological views with satisfaction; for notwithstanding all my own Arminianism and that of others, they said they never could believe that the sheep of Christ would perish when he had positively declared to the contrary. Others, when they heard the doctrine of grace fairly stated and explained, acknowledged that they had been influenced by prejudice and mistaken views, and readily embraced the truth.

Some, however, yet differ from me, and some too that are as dear to me as my own soul, but blessed be God they are not Arminians in heart, but appear to have the mind of Christ, humble, faithful and devoted Christians. As such I love them, and find that when they express themselves in relation to their exercises of mind, they talk as I believe abasing themselves; giving glory to God, acknowledging their entire dependance on his grace for salvation, and the justice of his law in condemning them; and such a *love* to his holy law as not to desire to be saved at the expense of it. Such souls are dear to me, lay near, *very* near my heart; not only those in the particular church of which I have the care, but wherever I see them. And God who knows my heart knows full well that my labour to shew the errors of some of their theological

sentiments flows not from a principle of hatred to them, but of love and good will—desiring to glorify God and to do good to man. O that they would thus receive it, and may the happy time soon come when we shall all see eye to eye! When I come to give up my former religious sentiments and advocate those which I considered to be congenial with truth and the Bible, I think I can truly say that I *suffered* for the *sake* of truth. I was represented as *unstable*, and it seemed to be a mighty accusation against me that I had changed my sentiments.

I was willing to have it understood that I had changed my theological views *once*, and only once. I was taught Arminianism and imbibed it in my youth, and was convinced of my error as I have already stated, and this is the only change which has ever taken place in my mind in respect to *doctrinal* points.

I have shewn the reader why the church in Cranston withdrew from the Six Principle Baptists, viz. on account of their confining the communion to *those* who had submitted to the imposition of hands.

Many at this time of whom I thought I had reason to hope better things, seemed to take pleasure in misrepresenting me in this respect. One man on hearing (while about an hundred miles from home) that I had said in my own hired house that I considered the doctrine of falling from grace was a false doctrine, lost no time in calling a meeting in Pawtucket, in the house which we lost, and publicly calumniated me by making statements that I had changed my sentiments four or five times. I remonstrated with him by letter and requested him to retract his statements, but in vain. He was at that time a Methodist, but has since left that people and united with the Free Will Baptists. The fact was, I never had altered my opinion on any point of doctrine or ordinances more than once. I was taught the notions of the Six Principle Baptists in respect to the communion, when young, and afterwards on reflection, was convinced that this was unscriptural ground. I remain of the same opinion still.

I did not leave the Free Will Baptists on account of any change of sentiments on *theological points*, but for reasons already stated. I always had invariably been an Arminian, nor did I give up this system until after (as before mentioned) my seperation from the Free Will Baptists. Eventually I *did* give it up, and embraced the views of doctrine advanced and vindicated in the foregoing chapters.

Now if I should renounce my present views and embrace Arminianism or any other system of divinity *radically* different from the one which I now consider truth, I should *then* be justly chargeable with having changed my sentiments twice; but at present I consider it to be an absolute falsehood for any one to state that I have changed my sentiments more than once. It grieved me much to see the disposition manifest in some of my former Arminian friends thus unjustly to misrepresent me. Is this doing by others as we would have others do by us.

I felt quite willing that my Arminian friends should, if they conceived me to be in an error, canvass the subject, and disprove my sentiments if they were false—but for a professed minister to appoint a public meeting and before perhaps three or four hundred persons, endeavour to injure my character by such false statements as I have just mentioned, and this merely because I took the liberty to say in conversation with two or three christian friends that I believed the doctrine of falling from grace to be a false doctrine, appeared to me at least a violation of the command of God against evil speaking. I began to learn more about the offence of the cross than ever I knew before. It was sounded out through all the regions of my acquaintance that I had become a Calvinist, and my former Arminian friends began to look on me as if I were a bear, or some other carniverous animal. They thought Calvinism tantamount to *devilism*—and supposed, to be sure that I had received the "mark of the beast." When interrogated in respect to the subject, I ever endeavoured to explain what I believed, and constantly told the enquirers into this moral phenome-

non that I was willing to have imputed to me my *real* sentiments, but was by no means willing to be represented as believing what Arminians generally termed Calvinism. This seemed really perplexing to some, because they could not obtain it from my own mouth that I was a Calvinist. I told them there was nothing definite in the term. I was willing to be represented as agreeing *generally* in sentiment with *some* writers on divinity who were stated Calvinists, and mentioned Fuller, and others of the same sentiments.

About this time our Annual Conference was held at Providence, and numbers come, eager to hear me preach my *new doctrine.* I thought their ears were pretty well open, and I preached them a sermon on Christian obedience! I however preached considerably on doctrinal points, and in private conversation with my Christian friends, endeavoured to expound that system of divinity, which I considered to be eternal truth.

My natural brother, whom I loved affectionately, and who had also commenced preaching, was one of my most violent opposers. I endeavoured to reason with him a number of times, but all seemed in vain. He reprobated the system *in toto.* But God did a work easily which was far beyond my power to accomplish. HE revolutionized him completely. I thought in this I could evidently see the hand of providence. He is now, I hope, a zealous advocate for the truth. I believe I shall not be accused by the reader, of having yet dealt much in the relation of dreams, in the course of this work, but he related one to me which he had about this time, which, together with the interpetation he gave, was, if nothing more, so amusing that I must be permitted to insert it. He said "he dreamed that he went into an apartment of his house, and to his surprise, very unexpectedly saw there a *most hideous*, *ill-looking*, *over-grown* "Squaw." She appeared to be as large as two or three common persons, and her movement was terrific and frightful. He felt extremly disgusted at her appearance, but pre-

sently she exhibited the most beautiful vessel imaginable. It was covered with inscriptions, and he was convinced that it was incalculably valuable, and composed of materials more precious than any thing else in the universe. This was the principal part of the dream, and the interpretation which he seemed inclined to give, was, that the old "Squaw" was the representation of Arminians and others, of what they call "Calvinism," and that her being in possession of the invaluable vessel, signified that notwithstanding this frightful portrait which is drawn and held up to terrify the unsuspecting; yet many of those who are called Calvinists, have got the truth—yea, they bear the vessels of the Lord! I thought the interpretation very appropriate

Reader, I would advise you not to turn too quick away from a man *merely* because he is called a Calvinist, even if Calvinism has been so represented to you as to appear as disagreable as this "old Squaw" did to my brother, in his dream. I determined, notwithstanding the clamor which was raised against me on account of my change of sentiments, to face the storm, and go to Christ, without the camp, bearing his reproach. God in mercy also raised me up many friends. Not only did the church under my care generally continue my steadfast friends, but also the Associate Baptist church in Pawtucket, together with their pastor, manifested for me friendship and Christian fellowship in these days of trials. This was more gratefully received by me from the consideration that I had felt a very strong prejudice against them, when I first came into the place, thinking it almost lawful to hang people who were Calvinists. But they recompensed not railing for railing, but rather obeyed the command of God, and overcome evil with good.—Many of the members of that church are dear to me, and I hope I feel grateful to God for their kindness and friendship. I cannot forbear to mention the name of Oliver Starkweather, Esq. the memory of

whose kindness and affection manifested to me I trust will be commensurate with my existence.

Soon after I became established in my mind on doctrinal points, I concluded to publish a work on the perseverance of the saints, which I commenced and continued writing as I had opportunity, and which was finally completed and issued from the press in July, 1827. The arrangement of the work was in two parts—1st, to answer all the objections which I had heard urged against the doctrine—and 2d, to prove it to be true. I had the satisfaction of this work's receiving the approbation of those whom I consider competent judges. I have already transcribed the commendatory remarks from the Religious Messenger, (see page —,) which was at this time published under the patronage of the Rhode-Island State Convention, and edited by Mr. William Goodell, present editor of the Philanthropist and Investigator, published in Boston, a man of superior talents, and an able investigator of moral and religious subjects. Besides, I have reason to believe that it has been instrumental in the hands of God of doing much good. Arminians, however, or some of them at least, could hardly pardon me for publishing it. About this time I felt it my duty to preach very pointedly against the doctrine of universalism. I could not be content with the course pursued by most ministers "to let it alone," but considering it to be ruinous to the souls of men, congenial with the state of the carnal heart, and fondly embraced by multitudes who wished to live in sin and still be saved, it seemed to me my duty plainly and unreservedly to point it out as the doctrine of the devil and the sure destruction of all its votaries. This stirred up many of its advocates, and seemed to raise in their breasts a spirit of hatred against me, which they made manifest (many of them at least,) in their conduct. They seemed disposed to injure me if possible. They would attend in crowds to hear me preach evidently determined to find fault and would frequently misrepresent what I said. One evening, it being

last evening in the year, I was expatiating on the awful subject of eternity, and when speaking of its duration, mentioned that I was not long since in at one of our stores, where they were burning Lehigh coal in a small stove, and made this remark to the clerk, "Suppose our earth were one solid mass of coal, how long would it take to consume it all in this stove." I mentioned in speaking that although this would take an innumerable number of years, yet after the whole should be consumed, the length of time would bear no comparison with eternity! eternity would be but just begun. Some of them went away and said that I stated that after a sinner had been in hell a thousand years, take him out and put him into a stove made red hot with Lehigh coal, he would freeze to death in a moment!! I understood that the author of this was a man who sometimes tried to preach universalism. At any rate it was published in their paper at Providence. Many such silly lies were put in circulation, with an evident disposition also in many to injure my moral character if possible. They literally seemed to gnash on me with their teeth. Not all however, who were professed universalists treated me thus. Some who were my near neighbours conducted very differently and have done me many kind offices, for which I feel thankful. God enabled me to maintain my stand for the truth, and notwithstanding some of my friends seemed to tremble for fear they would swallow me up, yet many stood by me and held up my hands in the hour of battle. Some of my friends were for the "*letting alone plan*," for fear I should lose some clever universalists who were in the habit of hearing me preach. My answer generally was that by the grace of God I would preach as I felt a duty, if every person on earth left me. I thought I knew about in what *latitude* I was, and besides I had a prop in this commotion, which none knew but my God and myself, nor never, I think, will, until I am laid in the dust.

My Arminian friends had been telling me that in

embracing my present views on theology I should lose my usefulness in preaching—reminded me how many I *had been* instrumental in awakening, &c. but *now* I might bid farewell to any expectations of such results. God, in mercy, so ordered it that they were proved mistaken in their calculations on this head. Never perhaps was my preaching more blessed than now.—I frequently made excursions out into the neighbouring towns and villages, and almost always saw in a short time some of the fruit of my labour.

About this time I made a visit to Sutton, and commenced an interesting acquaintance with the Rev. J. B. Boomer and his people, which has since been kept up with increasing satisfaction to myself. A circumstance transpired as I was about leaving there at the time of my first visit, which rather astonished me, and which I cannot forbear mentioning. I made this visit in company with a very affectionate brother in Christ, it being the place of his nativity, and where a number of his relatives yet remained. Among these was a brother by the name of Stephen Cole, who had been entirely blind for about seventeen years, but who nevertheless was reputed eminently pious and an efficient and useful member of the Baptist church in Sutton. Besides, notwithstanding his total blindness he laboured constantly, would make baskets equal to any whatever, and by the persevering industry and prudence of himself and wife, he had acquired a convenient house for the residence of himself and family, with other appurtenances. This man came to the house from which we were about to take our departure homeward, early in the morning, to bid us farewell, &c. and after a few moments interview expressed himself to this amount: That he never had been in the habit of giving much heed to dreams, but that he dreamed a dream about two years since, which had been more in his mind than any other which he ever had. He said he dreamed that he and his family were in bed and the Lord Jesus in his human form came into the house. Some conversation took place in relation to the missionary plans, and in a short time he departed

and made his way towards Providence, while he (Cole,) followed him and soon found himself with the Saviour walking down Providence streets. He said that the town seemed to be much given up to pride and worldly pomp, and that superfluity in dress seemed to be the prevalent evil and awakened the displeasure of our Lord. Presently after reaching about the centre of the town the Lord Jesus ascended to a conspicuous place, and began in a most awfully solemn manner to reprove the people who gathered around in crowds, for their sins. Such preaching he said he never heard, and it seemed considerably aimed at their manner of dressing and living. After he finished his testimony he descended and turned to Mr. Cole and asked him if he knew of any one in these regions who would receive his testimony and entertain him. He told him he did; he knew a man by the name of Potter, who would. Immediately he said our Lord took him by the arm and led him away some distance to a house where the person just alluded to stood ready to receive them and gave them a hearty welcome.

When he came to describe the house to which they went, I was struck with astonishment, for it seemed exactly to answer the description of the one where I resided. There were some peculiarities which made this more evident, particularly the manner of entrance—the stairs going up on the out side &c. Besides, he said when he had the dream he had never heard of me, and was acquainted with no person by the name of Potter. He said when I came into the neighbourhood it renewed the dream in his mind, and he seemed to be forcibly impressed that I was the person whom he dreamed of. Not long after, he made a visit to Pawtucket, and when he come to ascend the stairs into the house where I lived, he seemed remarkably affected, and felt assured that it was the very place where he dreamed of being led by the Lord and entertained.

After I became established in my present views of the doctrines of the gospel, I had increasing views of

my own unworthiness and vileness, and the self loathing which I have since experienced, I know it to be impossible for me to describe, in consequence of seeing myself in the true mirror, the unalterable law of God, instead of the Arminian looking-glass, which makes kind allowances, &c. But notwithstanding the views which I have had of the native depravity and exceeding sinfulness of my own heart, which has caused, as it were, rivers of tears to run down my cheeks, yet I can say as in the presence of God, that I do not know that my hope of salvation has been shaken for a moment, for some four or five years; ever since I was delivered (for I consider it a merciful deliverance) from the Arminian system. I dont know that the reader will give this statement credit, but that is not my business, but to write the truth. Although as I have already stated, I have had soul humbling views of my own vileness, almost constantly; yet notwithstanding this, I have not, that I know of, seen one minute that I *could really doubt* my eternal salvation—and this confidenee and assurance has arisen from a consciousness, of at times being the subject of gracious exercises of heart. One thing, I know that I have not served God from mercinary hopes of heaven or slavish fear of hell, or of being finally lost, during this time, *if* I have served him at all.

Many of my Arminian friends have observed to me that they should think that I should be perfectly happy, if I were sure that I was a Christian, and at the same time believed that every real Christian will finally be saved. My answer is, that undoubtedly I should be perfectly happy, if I were perfectly and constantly holy; but to tell about a Christian's being happy any further than he is holy, is to me, at least, strange talk. It is impossible in the nature of things. You may assure him of heaven and eternal happiness, and yet if he feels in any degree *unlike God*, he will mourn, and be distressed on account of it. He never can be satisfied until he awakes in the likeness of his Redeemer.

O how I have, during this time abhorred myself, when seeing the inconsistancy of my heart, its remaining desperate wickedness and deceitfulness. How clearly have I seen that nothing short of the determination of the great God, who is omnipotent in power, would ever bring such a perverse wretch to heaven. I have frequently retired alone and wept aloud, being unable to refrain from it, in view of my great unlikenes to my Saviour.

In proportion as I had these views of my hell-deserving, considered *in myself*, I had corresponding exalted views of the glorious grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and more constantly realized that it was by grace alone that I could be saved. At the same time I have enjoyed unspeakable satisfaction from the reflection that "God reigns"—that notwithstanding wicked men and seducers wax worse and worse, opposing the government and counsel of God, and though things in general wear a dark aspect to us, as if the Lord had forsaken the earth; yet the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, and will ultimately be glorified n them that are saved, and them that perish; and though finally impenitent sinners may bring upon themselves swift destruction by their free, voluntary disobedience, yet God will cause all things to work together for the good of those who love God, who are the called according to his purpose.

As it respects temporal blessings, I have always had just enough. I never had a stated salary, that is, a particular sum fixed upon per year, for preaching—but my plan has been to enter into the vineyard of the Lord, and commence work according to orders, believing that if I were truly called there by the Master, he would not suffer me to want for any good thing. If we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all these things shall be added unto us. I should think if a man should say that he believed he was moved by the Holy Ghost to preach the gospel, and had sufficient temporal blessings for the day, and was in a situation where there was an evident pros-

pect of doing good, and at the same time leave the place, because he feared coming to want *some time hence*, betrayed a great lack of faith in God, and most surely demonstrated that he put more confidence in mortal man, than in Him who made "the worlds."—At the same time let us remember that a people who will let a minister of the gospel want for the comforts of life, while labouring among them, if it be in their power to render him assistance, deny the faith, and are worse than infidels. The labourer is worthy of his hire, and although it ill becomes a minister of Christ to manifest more anxiety about his salary or temporal support, than about the salvation of the souls of the people, to whom he preaches; yet, it as ill becomes a people to neglect their minister, and suffer his mind to be embarrassed with pecuniary difficulties. God will undoubtedly make it manifest in the great and solemn day, that the distress manifested by many on account of the clamor against hireling preachers, originated in that fruitful source of all evil, "the love of money"—And while many hireling preachers will undoubtedly be denied an admittance into the heavenly Jerusalem, multitudes of selfish hearers will also undoubtedly find that no covetous man who is an idolater, hath an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God! Let ministers and people remember their mutual duties.

For my own part I have thought no minister was ever blest with more sympathetic, kind, and affectionate friends and brethren, than myself. The church of which I had the care, although generally not in affluent circumstances, have nevertheless loaded me with favours, and, with perhaps some individual exceptions, unceasingly manifested an anxiety for my comfortable support, which demands from me never failing gratitude and esteem.

In reflecting on the goodness of God to me, and the kindness of my brethren and friends, and at the same time realizing myself to be unworthy of the least of the favours which I have received, my soul is frequent-

ly humbled within me. Surely I have made poor returns, and have reason to repent of my negligence, stupidity and inactivity, in dust and ashes before God and man.

Within two years both of my kind parents have been called from earth, to try the realities of the invisible world! My mother, as I have already mentioned, was first taken. I had always thought it would be almost insupportable for me to part with my parents, and when I was notified of her sickness, which it was thought would be unto death, and while making my way to visit her, and also, when first entering the room where she lay sick, and panting for breath, I was exercised with feelings that are known only to those who have parted with parents most affectionately dear to them; but finally grace triumphed, for a sweet heavenly spirit seemed to fill the very room where she lay. Never do I recollect of seeing a soul more calm, serene and triumphant in death, than hers appeared to be. After the first flow of natural feeling had a little subsided, I asked her how she felt in her mind, and received the following, in substance, in answer. Said she, the day that I was taken sick there was an appearance of another great storm of snow, which is naturally disagreeable, there having been so much, and it is now so late in the season for snow, but I reflected on it for a moment, and could with all my heart say—If it storms, it will be well, and if it is fair weather, it will be well—If I am sick, it will be well, and if I enjoy health, it will be well—If I live it will be well, and it will be well if I die!—So have I felt ever since, and so do I feel now! She then wished me to pray with her once more, which I accordingly did, and returned home in order to bring my wife to see her in the morning, but never saw her more, alive; she died most sweetly and calmly in the evening. The whole family seemed supported beyond their most sanguine expectat ions, under this dispensation in the removal of one

of the lovliest earthly friends that most ever lived.—O the value of religion, in a dying hour, not only to those who die, but to friends who survive to witness the scene. The following lines in rhyme, which I mostly penned down about the time of my mother's death, although they make no pretensions to being good poetry, yet are somewhat expressive of the scene, and the reader will therefore pardon me for here introducing them.

The wrap at the door, we all heard as usual,
And the door, it was open'd with alacrity too,
Come, stranger, come in, (for we knew no refusal,)
Dost thou seek refreshment or to tell something new?

I'm thy Father's hir'd man quoth the serious stranger,
And come on an errand both solemn and sad
Thy mother, thy mother, is sick and in danger,
To see thee once more would make her heart glad.

And is there some hope, (for I wish'd so to have it,)
O tell me, pray tell me, is there hope of her life,
To me her life's precious I pray God to spare it,
Ah, how can I witness her last dying strife.

I thought of my childhood, and my mother's sweet counsel,
As I mounted the steed and rode over the plain
Ah! how can I give her the last solemn farewell,
Who always stood by me in sorrow and pain.

'Tis my mother, my mother, (how dear is a mother!)
That used to console me in the dark trying storm,
Now sickness has seized her, I fear now t'will sever
My mother far from me no more to return!

And I thought of the days of my youth and my boyhood
The counsel she gave me and the tears that she shed,
And the prayers offer'd since I grew up to manhood,
That heaven would bless me, that my soul might be fed.

And now must I lose all her counsel and kindness,
Ah! no more must she visit my humble abode
Must death close her eyes that beam'd with such mildness,
When she told me of heaven and marked out the road.

Thus the steed mov'd on swiftly to the house of my father,
And the door it was open'd by brothers and friends
I gaz'd on their faces, and they look'd at each other,
And *silently* told me she's near to her end!

And has the time come that dread solemn hour,
T'foreboding of which has long made me mourn,
When my mother must yield to death's dreadful power,
No more shall I see her while here I sojourn?

Thus thought I in silence while I warmed my cold fingers,
Preparing to enter the room where she lay,
And to see her on the brink of eternity linger,
To comfort her *soul* and to hear what she would say.

And I thought I'd not weep when I went to her bed side,
For she could not endure that her children should mourn,
So I braced up my bosom as I set by the fireside,
Then made my way *softly* to the dark solemn room!

And I entered the door and cast a look at her,
O, nature then faultered, I cried like a babe,
My braces were gone and my ship lost her rudder,
But I wiped of the tear when I heard what she said,

For she talk'd of her comfort which religion imparted,
To her soul as she lingered and panted for breath,
And told me to weep not if she never recover'd
For grace reigned triumphant o'er sorrow and death!

Thus died my dear mother, but let me not murmur
I'll meet her I trust in the regions above,
Where sin, pain, and death does never disturb her,
And where we shall dwell in an ocean of love!

About one year after the decease of my mother my father followed her. He had for some time previous to her death been out of health, and after she was taken seemed rapidly to break down. His death however, was rather sudden and unexpected when it took place, and I received no intelligence that he was thought to be near his end, until the messneger came with the news that he was gone, on the day too that I was expecting a visit from him. He never appeared so strong in the faith as my mother, yet he expressed great support and comfort in religion as he was gradually declining and travelling down to the grave, and rejoiced in the hope of resting with God in heaven, where he trusted, he said, that he should meet his wife no more to part, or words to this import. His moral character through life I believe was irreproachable. The following is an obituary notice of his death from the pen of Judge Howard, a respectable citizen of Cranston, who had for about thirty years been his near neighbour:

"Died in Coventry, on Friday morning last, Col. Andrew Potter, aged 67 years. In the domestic relations of life, and in all his dealing with his fellow men, he kept steadily in view the great principles of virtue and religion; and by his suavity of manners, the benevolence of his disposition, and his many acts of kindness, had gained the esteem and respect of all who knew him. Although wasting under the influence of disease for many years, and to add to his afflictions, deprived of the partner of his cares and the soother of his sorrows, yet he uttered no complaint, but sought for and found consolation and support in the Christian religion, of which he was a worthy professor. Having lived to enjoy the satisfaction of seeing two of his sons ordained to the ministry and atten-

tively listened to as preachers of the gospel, he had no desire to prolong his stay here, and could welcome death as the end of his sorrows and the commencement of never ending felicity. 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.'"

Not long since, the Rhode Island Quarterly meeting acted over the same farce in relation to the Cranston Church, that they did towards us; the circumstances were substantially as follows: The Cranston church excluded five members, one of whom was the clerk of the church. He peremptorily refused to give up the church book, before and after his exclusion, but called himself and those who were excluded with him, together with two members who were *before* excluded, and also a very few others who were prevailed upon to join them, "the church," that is, the original church. The Free Will Baptist Quarterly Meeting seem to have approbated them in this conduct, for they have received them into their connexas the Cranston church. Now this very same clerk represented the Cranston Church as having 265 members at the annual meeting of our Conference at Pawtucket, about two years since, after which many more were added *before* the time that he was excluded, making the total number over 300, yet he now comes forward and calls himself, with these few members, (the most, I understood by the Rev. Mr. Tobey, which they pretend to count with them at the time they were received, being but about 40) the church! And refuses moreover to give up the property of the Cranston church, viz. their book which they had entrusted to his care. And this conduct the Quarterly Meeting approbate.

I should not have stated this had it not been for a circumstance which transpired the other day, which I shall here mention. Being on a visit to the neighborhood of the Nightingale factory in Smithfield, and falling in company with some of the members of the Cranston church, they stated that a Free Will Baptist preacher by the name of John Yenshaw, had paid

them a visit, and evidently tried to disaffect their minds towards the church of which they were members; vindicated the cause of the excluded members before mentioned, and furthermore contended that they were the original Cranston church—and most impudently asked one of them, Mrs. H———, if she had gone off with Elder T——'s party, or words to that import. She answered that she had not gone off with any body. Well then, he said, you are a member of *our* church—she answered, No, I am not a member of your church, I belong to the Cranston church, where I first joined.

Now such an outrage on common sense, plain truth, scripture discipline and every thing else almost which is good, looked to me so abominable and disgusting that I could not forbear making this statement—and this individual is not alone in his statement neither. Now suppose, reader, that a Town Clerk should be displaced from his office and still refuse to give up the records of the town, what *name* would be given to such conduct? This man I understand was first turned out of the office of Clerk, *before* he was excluded from the Church, and refused to give up the records of the Church when they demanded them to be placed in the hands of his successor, and set at defiance the power and authority of the church.

Do the Free Will Baptist Quarterly Meeting intend to pursue this course in this country, approbating and encouraging refractory individual members in the churches of other denominations, in not submitting to wholesome church discipline, and in withholding property when demanded which the church may have entrusted totheir care?

One of their principal men once told me that he did not wish for a much better recommendation than an excommunication from a Calvinistic Baptist church, or words to the same import; and this conduct looks as if the Quarterly Meeting had imbibed the same doctrine. If I have not stated facts, let it be shewn wherein I have erred. Let it be denied if it can be

that according to the statement of this very clerk himself, there were in the Cranston church more than 300 members; and let it be shewn, if it can be, that *one eighth part* of the whole are united with him; and let it be shewn also, *how it is*, that these few members are the church—*the original church.* The fact is, almost the whole of the church have been personally visited, and their signatures obtained, stating how they stand in relation to this affair; and I promise by the grace of God, if I can wield a pen and am not otherwise hindered in divine providence, that if the Free Will Baptists shall undertake to vindicate their proceedings in relation to this affair and not give a correct statement, that ten thousand Pamphlets shall be forth coming in due season, for gratuitous distribution, in support of the truth; *well certified* too, by an overwhelming majority of the Cranston church who *were* members at the time the difficulty took place. I feel an attachment to that church, and moreover, I am determined by the assistance of God's grace, to bear my testimony against such proceedings. It is totally destructive of all church government and discipline, and strikes at the very root of the testimony of Christ and his apostles in relation to this subject.

These members *at best, taking them together, can only be considered as seceders from the original church*, and most certainly the leading ones were excluded, and therefore for any man or set of men to say that they are the original church, and to make this a pretence for keeping *the property* of the original church, is conduct which I leave the candid reader to name as decently as he can. If the Free Will Baptists are determined to pursue this track they will find one man at least in these regions who will not bow to them "*I think.*".

No doubt but this testimony will add to my former sins, in *their view*, and I shall now, if possible, be considered more revengeful and obstinate than ever. If I could only become *clever enough* to contend that a mere handful of ungovernable members in a large

church, are the church, in opposition to eight or ten times their number—that the clerk of a church is warrantable in keeping the property of the church which has been entrusted to him, when demanded; or that a church clerk by carrying away the *records*, does certainly carry away *the church*, no doubt but I should then be considered by some people a very fine man—especially if I would advocate such a theory in circumstances when it would be a favour to OUR DENOMINATION.

"He that hath ears to hear let him hear" this plain truth, that an unholy combination against the truth will never prevail, although its votaries are as numerous as the sands of the sea shore.

I pity from my heart some individuals of the Cranston church who have become involved in this affair, and have, as they think, taken shelter under the wings of the Quarterly Meeting. May the gracious God in mercy open their eyes to see the inconsistency of their conduct. I do not believe they understand by whom they are led.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS.

In reviewing my life what reasons do I find for the deepest humility and unfeigned repentance, and at the same time to adore and admire the astonishing grace and goodness of God in his dealings with me, the chief of sinners. When I consider the disadvantageous circumstances attending the early part of my life, in respect to obtaining even a common school education, I can but be thankful, that (however limited my literary attainments are,) I have, through Divine mercy obtained what I have. So that in general I hope I am able in speaking or writing to communicate my ideas so that I can be understood; and this, if our ideas are *good for any thing*, I consider to be the most important point. When I also consider my

relative situation at the time I experienced religion, falling exclusively into the hands of Arminian teachers, and being extremely ignorant of all theological controversies and disputed points, in divinity, O how grateful I feel to God, for leading me, a blind sinner, by a way that I knew not, and in bringing me to that knowledge of the truth to which, through divine grace, I have attained.

I never can express the satisfaction of mind which I have in the enjoyment of my present views of the doctrines of Christ. I have not the least wavering, in respect to their truth, nor have I had since I first was brought to see them in their beauty, which is now some four or five years. In the light of that system of divinity which I now am satisfied is (in the main) the truth, I see the ever blessed God on the throne of the universe, doing all his pleasure—and although multitudes of men and devils raise their hearts and hands in rebellion against his government, and bring upon themselves swift destruction, yet am I sure that his counsel shall stand, and that he will conduct and overrule all things in the moral and natural world, to his own glory and greatest general good of intelligent creatures. Although clouds of darkness may be round about his throne, and although there may be many things in his works, dispensations and ways, that to me, a poor finite creature, are incomprehensible, yet being assured that the Judge of all the earth will do right, that he is not only infinite in wisdom, omnipotent in power, omniscient and omnipresent, but also infinitely good and benevolent, I learn to receive implicitly what he has taught me in his word, without cavilling, and to bow in willing submission to the dispensations of his providence. I mean particularly in respect to those things which Arminians and others conceive, as they say, to be so intolerably awful, viz. God's dealing differently with men for his own glory and the general good of the universe, although he deals unjustly by none.

I feel, I know, to be less than the least of all saints,

the most sinful, unworthy wretch who ever lived, having requited the Lord with the vilest ingratitude for blessings, great and innumerable, which I have constantly received, from my birth to the present moment; sinned against light and knowledge, and that too against a God who has been gracious to me in delivering me in the day of trouble, when I was ready to sink to ruin forever, for which I know I deserve the lowest hell, and on account of which I frequently cry out, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Yet notwithstanding this, I do rejoice that the "Lord God omnipotent reigneth," and am willing to be in his hands for life and death, for time and for eternity!

How is it possible for a saint to have comfort, in view of future scenes, according to Arminian sentiments? Suppose that it is promised in the word of God, that Jesus shall reign from shore to shore, that his kingdom shall ultimately prevail, and fill the whole earth?—yet are these things promised any *more positively* than that his sheep shall never perish?—Surely not, why then may not one fail as well as the other? Why not say that Christ shall reign in the earth, and that the knowledge of God shall cover the earth as the waters do the sea, "IF" *men* will submit to him? but it is *doubtful* whether they will or not, and *consequently* it is altogether uncertain whether the stone which was cut out of the mountains, without hands, shall fill the whole earth, or not; or indeed, whether Christ to-morrow, or next year shall have one single subject or not on the earth—for as for obtaining new ones, he may offer salvation to this individual and he may refuse, to another who also rejects, and so on through the whole, and be universally spurned; and as for those who have become Christians, one may fall away, and another, and so on with the whole; Christ be left without a seed—the church exterminated from the earth—the wicked triumphing and the devil reigning. I do not in this, draw wrong inferences from their premises—these things are a fair deduction—and now I say what com-

fort to holy beings can there be in such sentiments?—But the fact is, pious Arminians do not stick to their text—but in their prayers, and anticipations of the future blessedness of gospel times, they unreservedly acknowledge, and take comfort from the system, which, in their heat of controversy, they say they hate—that is, that God will have a people, that the heathen shall be given to Christ for his inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for his possession; that God reigns and will reign and do all things well; that his providence is universal, even to the numbering of the hairs of our heads, and that not a sparrow falls to the ground without him.

It seems to me infinitely desirable that the people of God try to meet and unite on bible ground. That every one take his bible, with a mind open to conviction, and read it prayerfully; beseeching Him whose Spirit dictated the writing of it, to illuminate his understanding and open to him the scriptures—for every one to hunger and thirst for truth, and *labour* to know it, and dig for it, as for a hidden treasure. Dr. Scott tells us that he read the bible much, on his knees, while he was passing from the maze of error and false doctrine, to the views of doctrine in which he ultimately became established.

All denominations are praying for the watchmen to see eye to eye, and for all the people of God to be united. Now let me ask if there be not generally a contradiction in their conduct to their prayers? It is not likely to me that any denomination, *as* a denomination, stand perfectly right, both in doctrine and ordinances, as they should stand; and yet their attachment to their party seems to shut their eyes and ears to all which may be scripturally and reasonably alledged against their sentiments. Let it be remembered that when Christians unite in the days of the millennium, that it will be *in the truth.* While, therefore, we pray for the coming of the Lord, and for the destruction of anti-christ, for the dispelling of the clouds of error and superstition, and the glorious spread of gospel truth in its native simplicity and pu-

rity—how important that we do not oppose that very truth which we say we wish to prevail, and advocate error, while we declaim against it. Every person should believe for *himself*. We are commanded to have our loins girt about with truth, that we may be able to stand in the evil day, but if we take religious opinions at wholesale from others, without even examining them ourselves, and seeing *why* they are so, we shall not be found in this condition, but be tossed on an ocean of uncertainties in the trying hour. Now the bible, as it respects the fundamental doctrines which it contains, I consider a very plain book—but the truth, every part of it, is so contrary to the carnal heart, that where it is plainly exhibited in the bible—yes, as plainly as the sun ever shone, we frequently say we don't understand it. *If* we did not know that the heart of man is depraved, opposed to God and deceitful above all things, we should not believe it possible, if we did not know it to be a fact, that men professing to believe the bible to be an inspired book, and likewise declaring their willingness to acquiesce with all which it teaches, would make such work with it as they do.—When we reflect on it, we can but be astonished that the Lord bears with men as he does, who profess to be his friends, and at the same time appear to be determined to argue away the plain import of the scriptures, in order to accommodate it to *their* favourite notions and preconceived opinions.

How I ever got along as I did with Arminianism so long, with the bible in my hand, which so evidently condemns it, I can hardly conceive. Arminians say the bible teaches their doctrine—and there is no doubt but what it does, *so far as they believe the truth*, and no farther. They say that the bible teaches that Christ has made an atonement for the sins of the whole world: Very well; we grant it as readily as they do, and perfectly agree with them in sentiments, that whosoever will come, may come, &c. But is this *all* which the bible teaches in relation to this subject? I say not. The bible also teaches that

notwithstanding the atonement is general, and mercy offered, *freely* offered to all, yet, that man is so desperately wicked and opposed to God that not one will accept of salvation, unless God *bring* him to the feast—that is, make him or cause him to be willing to be saved in God's appointed way. And here they fall short, or will not give consent to *all* scripture, and when they come to the doctrine of falling away, they reject scripture, although it may not seem to *them* that they do.

My principal design in writing this work, is to endeavour to show the fallacy of that doctrine. Since I have become convinced that it is erroneous, I have felt an inexpressible strong desire that others who are entangled in it may also be convinced of their mistake. I hope that what I have written will be read with candour by my Arminian brethren, and as they read that they will give way to reflection. I hope that I have not written any thing which may *unnecessarily* injure the feelings of any one. I wish well to Mount Zion and all the children of God. I consider the doctrines which I have advanced and vindicated to be true, and those which I have opposed, more or less false; and I hope that my honestly *stating* this, and also using what argument I could in support of the position which I have taken, will not be construed by those who are of a different opinion, as implying a disposition to injure any person, but rather from a desire to do good to my fellow men. I hope that my old acquaintances in Rhode Island and elsewhere who may have conceived an opinion that I have embraced some soul-destroying, wicked doctrine, in the change which has taken place in my mind, will take care to examine my sentiments *critically* and *faithfully*, as I have stated them in the foregoing work, and not prejudge them beforehand, or hold on upon their prepossessions in opposition to scripture, reason and plain matter of fact. O may this work, imperfect as it is, prove a blessing to the souls of men and tend to the glory of that grace which I trust has made the au-

thor accepted in the beloved. With these desires I send it out into the world, realizing that I am rapidly hastening on the journey of life, and that I must soon make my exit from time into eternity! I implore an interest in the prayers of the reader, if he has access at the throne of grace. Those who have had similar trials know how to sympathize with me when men hate me, because I tell them the truth. If I know my own heart I feel no angry, malicious, revengeful disposition towards any living mortal. If any have injured me, I pray God to give them repentance, free forgiveness and eternal life. If I have injured any, which I undoubtedly have, and sometimes perhaps when not conscious of it, I earnestly entreat forgiveness of God and them. If any should take the trouble to peruse this volume, who never knew the joyful sound of salvation, nor the Saviour's pardoning love, O, may a gracious, and sin-forgiving God make it a blessing to their souls, which are immortal, and which shall never cease to exist. How valuable the soul, how important to be prepared to die! Let me tell the unconverted reader that there is a divine reality in the religion of Christ. It is admitted that many of us who profess to be Christians, dishonor our profession and give the world an occasion by our walk and conversation to conclude that it is all a fiction and delusion. But however this may be, yet after all, the bible is from heaven, there is pure and undefiled religion in the world, and God has still a people who are zealous of good works. We must be born again, or never enter the kingdom of heaven, if we die in our sins we shall be miserable in hell forever and ever! The door of mercy is wide open, flee for your life, while there is time. "Behold now is the accepted time;"—"Behold now is the day of salvation,"—"O that they were wise, that they would consider this, that they would remember their latter end."

It seems to me important that we understand the signs of the times. I consider that there never was a time in which the admonition of our Lord demanded more serious attention: "Watch and keep your garments." I think it evident that awful judgments and

calamities will soon visit the world generally. It is and has been the opinion of many who have made prophecy a study, and I think with good reason, that the sixth vial of God's wrath has for some time been running, the principal effect of which is the wasting away of the Ottoman empire. Do we not see its accomplishment? Perhaps that vial soon shall have run out: Then we look for the seventh vial, which will, I think, not consist in some local judgments, affecting some particular nation or empire, but will reach the whole world, and more or less affect all the nations of the earth; or rather the kingdom of Satan universally. It is said to be poured out into the air—Satan is also said to be the Prince of the power of the air, and all men breathe the air. The other vials were more local. This nation has as yet escaped national judgments; but let us not suppose that we shall not yet be visited. I conceive that many have very wrong ideas in respect to the manner in which the latter day glory of the church will be introduced. They seem to plainly imagine that the world will keep growing better and better, and the present inhabitants perhaps generally reformed, and that the benevolent plans of the present day, with additional exertion will evangelize the world and introduce the Millennium. There is no danger, to be sure, of Christians doing too much in spreading the gospel; and they may rest assured that for every exertion from a right motive, to build up the Redeemer's kingdom in the earth, they shall have a rich reward—and they may be the means of saving *some*. But after all, I think that we are warranted to believe, from the language of prophecy, that the most sweeping judgments await the wicked throughout the whole earth, before the introduction of the Millennial morn, which has ever fallen upon the world since the days of Noah. Now observe the following prophecies, which I will present as they are transcribed by a writer in the Utica Christian Repository, together with some of the same writer's remarks occasionally interspersed, which it seems to me are very appropriate.

"In the 2d Psalm, the Father says to the Son, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." This is usually considered as a promise which relates to the Millennium, and is often quoted in prayer as such; but probably in most cases under the impression of its being a promise that mankind generally shall be converted, and become the willing subjects of the Lord Jesus Christ. But this last conclusion must be drawn without much reflection; for it immediately follows, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." This is not saving, but destroying them.

"The prophecy of Isaiah contains much that relates to the Millennium. From the 60th chapter to the end, that appears to be the principal subject of discourse. In the 63d chapter, the Church asks—"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?" And the Lord Jesus answers, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." Again the Church asks, "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine vat?" And he answered, "I have trodden the wine press alone; and of the people there was none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For *the day of vengeance is in mine heart*, and *the year of my redeemed is come*. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth." The year of his redeemed, the time of their deliverance and peace, is to be introduced by the day of vengeance on his enemies. They are to be destroyed, not converted.

"The same event is thus spoken of in the 19th chapter of Revelation: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And he said unto me, write, blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written that no man knew but he himself: and he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood; and his name is called the Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the wine press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings,

and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire, burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh." Then follows, in the next chapter, the binding of Satan, and the thousand years' reign of the saints. The Millennium, then, is to be introduced by this great and terrible destruction of the wicked, and not by their conversion.

"The same events are connected together, in the 66th chapter of Isaiah. "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her all ye that mourn for her. For thus saith the Lord, behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb; and the hand of the Lord shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation toward his enemies. For behold the Lord will come with fire, and his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh; and the slain of the Lord shall be many."

"The same events also are connected together in the 24th chapter of Isaiah. "Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. The land shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled; for the Lord hath spoken this word. The earth mourneth, and fadeth away; the world languisheth and fadeth away; the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof: because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant." Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, *and few men left.*" A *few* are to be left, who shall be the friends of God. The prophet proceeds—"When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, there shall be as the shaking of an olive tree, and as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done. They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord, they shall

cry aloud from the sea. Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires, even the name of the Lord God of Israel in the isles of the sea. From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the righteous. But I said, my leanness, my leanness, woe unto me! The treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously. Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth.—And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare; for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage, and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall and not rise again. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited." They shall be shut up in the prison, where the souls of the wicked are, till the time appointed for the resurrection of the body, and the final judgment, when they shall be visited according to their works, with their full and final punishment. And the prophet adds, "Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." *Then*, that is, after this general destruction of the wicked from off the earth, the Lord shall reign over his people gloriously, and the church enjoy her millennial state.

"From these passages of scripture, it appears abundantly evident, that the Millennium is not to be introduced, as many expect, by the gradual increase of real religion till it fills the world, and brings all mankind under its influence. On the contrary, the great mass of mankind, at the time of its introduction, will be enemies to God, and will have reached a high pitch of wickedness, and will perhaps have nearly swallowed up the true church of Christ, and have begun their song of triumph at its anticipated speedy extinction, when the Lord will suddenly appear for the deliverance of his people and the dismay and overthrow of his enemies. "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage; until the day that Noah entered into the ark; and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise, also, as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all; even thus shall it be when the Son of Man is revealed."

"Behold I come quickly," saith the Lord, let us lay up a good foundation against the time to come!

LETTER TO LORENZO DOW.

Rev. Lorenzo Dow,

SIR—A few weeks since, a late publication of yours fell into my hands, entitled "Omnifarious Law Exemplified, or How to Curse, Lie, Cheat, Kill,&c. according to Law," and I found by perusing the work that you had lectured on what you termed, "The Law of Nature, Common Law, Salt Water Law, Fresh Water Law, Jocky Law," and sundry others, and although you did not formally mention the "Masonic Law," yet I observe that it claimed substantially a prominent feature in your book. I readily acknowledge that I was not at all pleased with your disquisitions on Masonic Law; I have therefore thought it expedient to suggest to you a few thoughts, to which I beg your candid attention.

About eight years since, I took one degree in speculative Free Masonry—to this step I was urged by those who *professed* to be my friends, and although I acknowledge, that *all things considered*, I consented to go forward and join the fraternity—yet I am confident that I never should have taken this step, but for the earnest entreaties of others, and the representations which were made to me by Masons, in respect to the institution, exalting it very highly in the scale of *pure morality*, as an handmaid to religion—benevolent in its objects, and also a source of great information in respect to some difficult subjects in the Old Testament, &c. I accordingly went forward, as already observed, and was initiated. I do not now distinctly recollect one single specific idea that was then taught me in relation to the principles of masonry, but the obligation to keep what

was taught me secret, and the penalty in case of breaking that obligation, I do remember. I never, after leaving the lodge, gave the sign of an entered apprentice, nor do I think that I could have given it one hour afterwards, correctly. I was tried by a Master Mason on this, some three or four years ago, and could not recollect scarcely any thing at all on the subject. I do not know that at the time, I conceived that there was any thing very iniquitous in the principles inculcated in the first degree—but I was considerably tried in respect to the manner in which I was inducted, the obligation which I had taken, and the penalty of that obligation, &c. This I mentioned to a Royal Arch Mason a few days afterwards, and being also disgusted with the conduct of some Masons, in relation to other subjects, I went no further.

Some three or four years since, before the Morgan excitement commenced, I was advised by some of my masonic friends to advance, and thought that I should, but in the providence of God was prevented, for which I now feel thankful.

The secrets of Masonry, therefore, excepting the obligation and penalty, I shall never reveal, from my own personal knowledge, for I cannot, if so disposed, having no distinct recollection of them. Since the great excitement on the subject, I have had very serious exercises in relation to the course which *duty* dictated for me to pursue. Nor did I become settled in my determinations until the perusal of your pamphlet last week, entitled "Omnifarious Law Exemplified." I had indeed before, when I had heard "Anti-Masons" condemned by wholesale, as men of no principle, vagabonds, perjured wretches, &c. by some Masons, been almost ready to come out and bear my testimony against such unhallowed conduct; yet the reflection that many valuable members of society were numbered among Masons, with many brethren in Christ, whom I highly esteemed, whose feelings would undoubtedly be hurt in consequence of such a course, together with the great question whether it was duty or not, and in addition, I must

also own the fear of man, of reproach, and of slander, being also thrown into the same scale—it preponderated in favour of silence. But when I came to peruse your book, just now alluded to, and find such language as this, evidently alluding to all who had renounced Masonry, viz. "*Those persons who publicly avow that they are perjured men, or else impostors, can have no claim to public confidence; but must appear in their true character as liars, taking their word for it; which is doing them true justice; of course, having destroyed the force of moral obligation from their minds, what trust or confidence can be placed in them? Methinks they must feel like Cain! Afraid of their lives! afraid of men—and go into voluntary exile.*" I say, when I come to read this, together with your giving Anti-Masons the characters of Judas, of the Pope, of the Inquisition of Spain, &c. "*I then 'believed,' and therefore 'will' I speak.*" If you ask me what I believed, I will frankly tell you that I believed and felt fully satisfied that you were advocating a bad cause, which I also expect to make appear in the sequel to every candid reader who may yet entertain any doubt at all on this subject. Before I proceed, however, suffer me to remind you that in early life, and in more advanced years, I entertained for you great veneration, for your apparent disinterestedness in the cause of God and humanity; and although I became, some time since, satisfied that you were erroneous in respect to some of your theological ideas, yet I still highly esteemed you as a Christian and a man; nor do I yet denounce you as entirely destitute of true religion. Yet that the stand which you have taken, in respect to the subject of Masonry and Anti-Masons, is obnoxious to truth—the law of love—the law of Christ—the common law—the law of nature—and, wrong in the sight of nature's God, I do not doubt. Whether it be inconsistent with masonic law, or their law of oaths, is another question, which may be more fully developed in the sequel; yet one thing is sure with me, that you ought to be reproved in the sight of heaven and earth, for the statements which you have made in relation to the

subject in question; and the more so, as you *have* possessed a considerable degree of influence with many in our country. O Lorenzo, is this *you.* You, who have complained so much of persecution—You who have wrote so much against bondage, ecclesiastical and political. I say, is this you, now denouncing Anti-Masons by wholesale, and comparing those who have renounced Masonry, without any qualification, to Judas, Iscariot, Cain, &c. and representing them as liars, who "have destroyed the force of moral obligation on their own minds," perjured persons, &c. In the name of justice, in the name of truth, in the name of virtue, in the name of religion, and of religion's God, I beseech you to forbear.

But I wish to call your attention more directly to the merits of the cause at issue between us. And I begin with this question—this plain question—this question which needs no sophistry to state, nor more than ordinary intellect to understand it.—"If a man promises to do wrong, had he better keep his promise or break it?" Or which is the same thing—"if he take an oath to do wrong, had he better persist in his oath or renounce it?"

Now you, and every other man, woman and child who have any conception of the immutable difference between right and wrong, know that there is but one plain correct answer to these questions; and that is, that it is an obligation that we are under, a *moral obligation*, an obligation to our God, to our country, to our families, and to ourselves, to renounce doing that which is wrong, however we may have previously, "*awfully*" (I think this the most applicable term,) promised that we would not. And if the *circumstances* attending making the *promise* independently of that which it binds us to do, renders it iniquitous in taking or retaining it, we are bound to renounce or denounce our conduct in *that also.* This is the truth, Lorenzo, ☞and you cannot deny it. Deny it if you can! You dare not deny it directly, but you do deny it indirectly. You deny it in your statement which I have

already quoted. You represent those who have renounced masonry as the most vile wretches on earth, and solely on this ground too. Yes, although their character in every other respect may be as unspotted as the clearest and brightest luminary in the heavens, yet *this*, in your estimation, (and I am sorry to say that the same spirit appears to be manifested by multitudes of the craft,) is enough to damn him to the lowest hell!! This is enough to constitute him a traitor—"a perjured wretch;" to fix upon him the character of "being dead to the force of moral obligation;" "unworthy of public confidence;" "a Judas, and a liar."—Lorenzo!—there is a righteous God, and there is an awful judgment, unto which you and those who are coadjutors with you in this work of defamation and slander, are fast approaching; where you will meet those which you have *indiscriminately* condemned as being actuated by the basest and vilest of motives, for having renounced masonry, face to face, before an impartial, heart-searching God, and it is possible that you will then find that instead of bearing the character which *you* now give them, and instead of having been actuated by the *motives* which *you* impute to them, they will appear clothed in white raiment, having come up out of great tribulation; and that in renouncing masonry they discharged what they considered a duty, and to answer a clear conscience to their God.

Do you not suppose, Lorenzo, that admitting *you* think there is nothing in the oaths and principles of masonry that need disturb the mind of a Christian who has become a member of the fraternity, yet that *some* may honestly conclude that there *is* in *their* judgment, and so renounce it from principle? Undoubtedly. And undoubtedly men *have* renounced it from such a conviction and principle; men whose characters for truth and veracity, for morality and religion, will not probably suffer, either in competition with your own or any other steadfast mason in all Christendom.

But the cause does not rest here; on the supposition

of those who have renounced, having put a wrong construction on masonry, and drawing wrong inferences, which have troubled their minds—but I shall show you plainly that the oaths or obligations of masonry are bad, and of course *not morally binding* on those who have taken them; and this from my own *personal knowledge* sufficiently, but more abundantly from the testimony of others who have travelled farther into the mysteries of the sequestered region. And, 1st, no man has a moral right to put his life in jeopardy, as masonic oaths bind him to do. That the masons have a law the penalty of which is death, I think you will not pretend to deny, and there is no rational doubt but that one man at least has had this penalty inflicted upon him; and if it be a good thing to cut a man's throat from ear to ear, for revealing the secrets of masonry, why then, masonry *so far* is a good institution; but if it be a bad thing thus to murder a man, then to be sure masonry is a bad institution; for that it is a *legitimate consequence* of masonic oaths, I do most solemnly declare, and you know it, and every other mason. Now *is* not this the masonic law; that you shall not reveal the secrets on penalty of having your throat cut, and is not that penalty according to the principles of masonry considered a just one? If not, why do they annex it? Does it mean nothing?—then why do they go through with such solemn mocking? Make a man promise *under* a penalty, and at the same time mean *no* penalty? and all this as in the presence of God, calling him to witness? If you turn it *that* way it is enough to blast the institution in the view of disinterested and candid men, to call on God to witness a thing, which, at the same time you are not sincere in, and do not mean. How far do you think this falls short of horrible blasphemy, and what kind of a good institution is this, that brings men into such a posture as they are placed to take upon themselves the obligations of masonry, when at the same time they do not mean as they say, but thus mock God and take his name in vain?

So that, although you say cutting a man's throat is not the penalty of the masonic law, you do not help it

much, for you thus make it out that they engage in awful blasphemous mocking, worse than profane swearing. But the legitimate penalty of the masonic law *is death;* and you know it, and every other mason, and now mark what I say, if it be right for a person to put himself under such a penalty, it is certainly right that the penalty should be executed in case of transgression; ☞this is the truth, Lorenzo, and you cannot deny it. Now masons say that if Morgan is murdered, some deluded fanaticks among the masons murdered him, as it is inconsistent with the principles of masonry. But *I* say that his murder was the *legitimate consequence* of the oaths of masonry, and the only excuse for the generality of masons, is, that they *do not* live up to their laws and principles, *This* constitutes the *shame* of the professors of the Christian religion, that they do not live up to their principles, but in *Masonry* it affords their only excuse. In speaking of Morgan, you say, "perhaps that some called masons have murdered him," &c. Now I say that the masonic law condemns him to death, and if he be murdered, masons must either go *counter* to their law and principles, or say amen to his death. This is a plain case. Thanks be to God that we have reason to believe that there are *but few* of them in the thing, that would be willing to walk by masonic rules, but no thanks to the institution for it at all. It is evident then that the promise is a bad one in the outset; and *consequently* instead of being morally binding it ought to be renounced and repented of without delay. But 2ndly, I wish to mention another thing; the *principles* of masonry are bad, if we may put any confidence in hundreds who have renounced it—they are completely anti-Christian. Mark *that* in one of their obligations in case of the failure of any member to keep the secrets inviolable; masons are bound as follows: "You further swear that should you ever know a companion violate any essential part of his obligation, you will use your decided endeavours by the blessing of God to bring such a person to the strictest and most condign punishment, agreeable to the rules and usages of our most

ancient fraternity, and this by pointing him out to the world as an unworthy and vicious vagabond, by opposing his interest, by deranging his business, by transferring his character after him wherever he may go, by exposing him to the contempt of the fraternity and of the whole world, but of our illustrious Order more especially, during his whole natural life." This is a part of the obligation of a Knight of the Red Cross, and as you have taken all the degrees in masonry, undoubtedly you know something about it. Need I say there never was a much more pernicious principle than this obligation involves, nourished in the breast of the devil himself? Is this a *good* institution that binds its members to such doleful work as this? To injure a man in his property and character, and that too as far as it is possible, all the days of his life, because he renounces masonry? Is *this* principle agreeable with the principles and precepts of the Christian religion? All which I have to say, if this be religion, then the devil is a Christian! *You* know that it is completely *anti-Christian;* for the Christian religion teaches us to love our enemies, and to do good to those who injure us; but this obligation binds its votaries to follow a man, although he may be as good a man as ever lived, with the most bitter, unrelenting persecution all the days of his life. Now it seems evident to me, that the very principles of this oath are manifest in an *awful* degree by many masons, and masons of high standing too, in their conduct towards those who have seceded. Look at your book, where you represent seceders as "liars," that "they can have no claim to public confidence," "that they have destroyed the force of moral obligation on their minds," and "think they must feel like Cain, afraid of their lives! afraid of men—and go into voluntary exile." Now here it is acted out, Lorenzo; such talk is an abomination in the sight of God; nevertheless, I acknowledge it to be perfectly consistent with the masonic creed. Now that some wicked men have renounced masonry, I will not dis-

pute; but that does not prove that *this* thing was bad, viz. renouncing masonry, any more than it proves that it would be a *bad thing* for a man who could not be considered in all respects, a *good man*, to save your life if it were in danger.

But to say that many *good men* have not renounced masonry, is what you, nor all the masons in Christendom, cannot make me believe. There has been but one man, that I know of, that has renounced masonry, in these regions, and of him or his character, I knew personally, nothing at all; I know, however, that he renounced it on his dying bed. But there are men, *not far* from here, who have renounced it, who, if their *neighbours* can be believed, are men of unblemished characters for morality and piety. I will mention the Rev. Mr. Smith, a Congregational minister in Fall-River. Now I, myself, have heard *masons* who knew him well, not a year ago, speak in the highest terms of him as a Christian minister and a gentleman. But now according to your book, according to the masonic creed, he must be looked upon as a perjured wretch, or an "impostor, a liar, unworthy of public confidence, must feel like Cain, afraid of his life, afraid of men, and must go into voluntary exile." He may be afraid of his life, and there would not be much wonder if he were to lose it, considering the fate of Morgan; but I do not think he feels much like Cain; but more like righteous Abel; at any rate, I think his case assimilates more to that of Abel's than that of Cain's.

I have understood, also, that the Rev. Moses Thatcher, of Wrentham, and the Rev. Charles Warren, of Attleborough, have lately become seceders.—Men, I believe, of unspotted characters. Besides which, I hear of numbers in other parts. Yet, however, these men may be real Christians, men of God, and renounce masonry because they *conceive it their duty;* yet, according to your book, they are Judases, Cains and liars. Lorenzo, you are *in this*, advocating the cause of the devil, undoubtedly; but, however, it

is consistent with your obligations as a mason ;— therefore, the principles of masonry are bad, and of course, instead of a man's destroying the force of moral obligation on his own mind, by renouncing it, he is *sacredly bound* to renounce it, by the moral law of God.

Now we have scripture testimony directly in point. Take the case of the two young men, mentioned by our Saviour ; one promised to obey his father, but the other *promised that he would not ;* yet he afterwards repented, broke this bad promise, and went and did the thing which he said *he would* not do ; and you know that this was approved by the Son of God himself. Take also the case of Herod, and you know that he ought not to have kept the promise which he made, and which by keeping, he murdered one of the best men that ever lived. This you cannot deny, and yet you maintain that Masonic oaths must be kept, when it is evident that they are bad ! What consistency. Men have undoubtedly done wrong *in taking* them, and of course they should confess and forsake.

I have not gone minutely into an investigation of the principles involved in the first degrees, but they are sufficiently bad when followed to their *legitimate consequences*, especially some things in the Royal Arch degree, to be reprobated and discountenanced by all good men ; and the only reason I consider why all good men who are Masons *do not* secede from the institution is for the want of a thorough and *impartial* examination into its principles and tendencies. It is not disputed but what Masons, as a body, taken collectively, are as respectable citizens as others ; but if they walked by *Masonic rules*, most certainly they would not be, but would act out the very spirit of Satan. There is also a kind of a *spell* put upon them by their obligations, which seems to prevent free investigation. They feel forbidden to even examine, or in the least call in question the articles of their creed. They have taken it by the " lump," with an assurance that it was good,and they have sworn to keep it ; and now they know not what to do but to hold on.

Now this assurance made to candidates before they take the obligations of Masonry, is another thing which I wish to consider. They are *assured* that there is nothing in Masonry contrary to their religion.—There may be nothing in it contrary to the religion of some men, who make it their business to *point out good men as vicious vagabonds, derange their business, and make them, if possible, objects of the contempt of the whole world*—but there is something contrary to the religion of the bible, as I think I have already shewn. This, therefore, is a *false* assurance, and consequently those who are thus induced to join it, are warrantable in renouncing it, if they find it different from what it was represented.

Your attempt to make us believe that the bible has been preserved in the world by Masons alone, is enough to make a man laugh and cry at the same moment. It is all of a piece, however, with attempts to make people believe that John the Baptist and some of the apostles were Masons, which is calculated to impress the minds of those who are unacquainted with the institution, that it is a religious institution, &c. I confess that it was *here* that my mind was first brought up to question the good effects of Masonry, considering it very probable that many Masons would think it religion enough to save their souls, and that it was calculated to delude men, and ruin them forever. Thus it has got hold on the minds of many ministers of the gospel, lately, who have been charmed with the representation that it was an handmaid to religion, threw great light on the scriptures of the Old Testament; and, indeed, that there were some parts of the scriptures which it was impossible to understand without being a Mason! Gratuitous initiation being offered them, they have rushed into the lodge rooms, by the permission of the Tyler, and after passing through a scene of "*bodily exercise*," most consummately foolish, not to say awfully blasphemous, they have come out, under an oath, to keep their disappointment an inviolable secret, on penalty of being killed. Others, seeing ministers *growing wise* so fast,

and considering it a good institution, because good men went into it, have followed suit, and thus ministers and people have been caught in the snare, and if nothing else prevents many of them from renouncing, in *my* humble opinion, the *mortification* of owning before the world that they have been made such great fools of, is more than they can well endure. It is no small thing to come down, from being a Master, Knight, High Priest, King, &c. to the humble station of a common man.

But suppose, Lorenzo, that you could make it out that the Masons existed as long ago as the days of the Babylonish captivity, and that the bible was preserved by them; what does this prove? Does it follow of course that the institution is a good one? If so, then it follows by the same parity of reasoning, you might prove that every man who keeps a bible in his house, is a good man! And you will not dispute, I think, but what some who have renounced Masonry, if not all, keep the bible in their houses; so according to this argument they must be good men, notwithstanding you pronounced them unworthy of public confidence, impostors or liars, having destroyed the force of moral obligation on their minds! Well, what next—why, you dreamed of Masonry before you became one; yes, and when I was a little boy I dreamed that the pig threw down the pen and got out, and it came to pass! and what of that? But it seems to me that you would have us think that this dream is rather an evidence of the divine approbation of Masonry. But don't you think that although some dreams may be from the Lord, yet that Satan very often troubles men in their sleep, and injects dreams into their minds. I believe this is almost universally admitted by divines. I think it was admitted by Messers. Wesley and Fletcher, and I think, also, you will, without hesitation, admit the idea as reasonable. And how then do you know but that the dream was a plan of the devil to lead you, in your old age, into a snare? Do you think the devil don't know what goes on in the lodge room? and

could he not whisper it to you in a dream? I should think this worthy of attention—at any rate, if you dream forever that Masonry is an excellent institution, I shall only consider them as *idle dreams*. But what next? You seem to intimate that Anti-Masonry proceeds altogether from selfish or political motives. Of this you have no proof at all—for if *some*, or even the *majority* oppose Masonry from such principles, it no more proves that Anti-Masonry is bad, than because many profess to be Christians from bad motives, proves that religion is bad; ☞this is the truth and you cannot deny it.

Finally, on the whole, whatever respect I may have for many Masons, as men, and many too in this village, and however I do believe that they have never, many of them, walked by the rules of the society; yet as to the *principles* of the institution, I must acknowledge that I consider them bad, and if Morgan is murdered according to Masonic oaths, stained with blood! And it becomes us most certainly to remember that if this be the case, and if God be righteous, "an inquisition will be made" on the institution "for blood," and those who, with their eyes open, hold on upon and advocate it, must abide by the consequences! For my own part, viewing it as I do, I feel it my duty thus publicly to declare that I dissent from it altogether. This, indeed, I have for a long time done, in a more *indirect* way; but it seems to me that duty requires that I should be more explicit than I have been. From the fate of others I may well calculate on my own. Yet nevertheless, let Masons point me out as a vicious vagabond, and endeavour to hold me up to the contempt of the whole world; yet I have a peace which they cannot take away, and moreover I have a hope which is like an anchor to my soul, that I shall soon be beyond the reach of Masonic vengeance; if they should endeavour to pour it out upon me, even in the realms of bliss, where "storms of malice never blow, and where temptations never come."

I conclude by remarking, that I hope you will not go down to the grave, persisting in the remarks which you have made in respect to seceding Masons—for let me tell you, that you and others, by such assertions, may plant thorns in the dying pillow! There is a righteous God, and by him we shall soon be arraigned to answer for the deeds done in the body. O may it be your happy lot and mine to be found of him in peace; but how can we expect to die in peace and be approbated by our Judge, if we indulge ourselves in pouring contempt upon one single saint, and unwarrantably represent him to be like Cain, and a liar, having destroyed the force of moral obligation from his mind?

Call and see me when you come this way, that we may reason on this subject, face to face.

Affectionately and respectfully, yours, &c.

RAY POTTER.

Pawtucket, June 4, 1829.

ERRATA.—The following errors having escaped notice, the reader is requested to correct them with a pen on the margin.

Page 67, 4th line from the bottom, for "*tolerable*," read "*tolerably*."
" 127, 12th line from the bottom, for "*say*," read "*see*."
" 140, 18th line from the top, for "*from*," read "*some*."
" 152, at the end of the note, bottom of the page, add "and in the other."
" 194, 2d line from the top, for "*they*." read "*he*."
" 249, about the middle, instead of "ask a *Calvinists*," read "ask a *Calvinist*."
" 267, 2 l. from top, for "*inconsistency*," read "*inconstancy*."

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